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**Abstract:** This chapter gives a psychologically robust account of virtuous and vicious intellectual self-trust. Tanesini starts by arguing that intellectual self-trust is a set of dispositions to rely on one's cognitive faculties, together with positive epistemic feelings and confidence in one's willpower. She then distinguishes one epistemically beneficial form of intellectual self-trust, confident optimism, and three pathological ones: arrogant, timid, and servile self-trust. Drawing on psychological research, she argues that each form of intellectual self-trust arises from a corresponding form of self-esteem. Confident optimism has its roots in healthy self-esteem, which frees the agent to be motivated in her inquiry by the prospect of achieving epistemic aims. Arrogant, timid, and servile self-trust, by contrast, derive from warped forms of self-esteem that focus the agent not on epistemic goods, but rather on her own vulnerability. Confident optimism about one's faculties, then, turns out to be an intellectually virtuous form of self-trust, whereas the three pathological forms of self-trust turn out to be intellectually vicious.

Some people have the measure of themselves. They come across as confident without being cocky. They are self-assured but not self-satisfied. They are steadfast in their convictions without being dogmatic or closed-minded about novel information that potentially undermines their views. They are proud of their achievements, but humble enough to accept or own their limitations. These individuals are rare. Three other kinds of people are more common.<sup>1</sup> The first two include those who lack in self-confidence and whom I describe as intellectually obsequious, and also others who are best characterised as intellectually timid. Individuals belonging to either of these two types are very often unsure of their

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<sup>1</sup> I do not intend these claims about frequency to have any firm empirical footing. They are anecdotal.

views. They do not know what they think about important issues. Even when an opinion can be extracted from them, they are not prepared to defend it. Instead, they easily change their minds and, at least in the case of servility, uncritically defer to the views espoused by other people.

The third kind concerns those who are full of themselves and whom are best thought of as intellectually arrogant. They are opinionated and pay little attention to criticisms or views opposed to their own. We can think of these three categories of people as exhibiting behaviors characteristic of different kinds of intellectual self-trust. Individuals who are confident, but not arrogant, trust their intellectual abilities. Further, this trust is often apt. Those who lack in self-confidence mistrust their capacities, but this diffidence is often unjustified. Finally, individuals, whose self-confidence is self-satisfied, put a lot of trust in themselves, but their trust is often unwarranted.<sup>2</sup>

These considerations suggest that some intellectual vices are closely connected to deficiencies in intellectual self-trust.<sup>3</sup> To my knowledge, this is a phenomenon that has been largely ignored in the philosophical literature to date. The main aim of this paper is to fill this gap by throwing light on the pathologies of self-trust caused by intellectual arrogance, obsequiousness and timidity. The paper also defends two further theses which are subservient to its primary goal. First, it supplies an account of intellectual self-trust as composed of dispositions to rely on the deliverances of one's epistemic faculties and abilities, together with confidence in one's will-power and a propensity to experience positive epistemic feelings of certainty and truth.<sup>4</sup> Second, it argues that appropriate self-trust depends on attitudes to the self which are not defensive.

The paper consists of five sections. The first offers an analysis of intellectual self-trust. The second describes the sort of ill-placed self-confidence characteristic of those who are intellectually arrogant. It contrasts this with the lack of confidence typical of those who are obsequious or intellectually timid, and also with the well-placed confidence of those who

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<sup>2</sup> I do not describe arrogant individuals as over-confident since a person could be smugly confident whilst being, because of sheer luck, epistemically justified in his self-confidence.

<sup>3</sup> The influence is reciprocal. Vices negatively impact on self-trust and recalibrations of self-trust facilitate the formation of intellectual vices.

<sup>4</sup> I do not intend to suggest that these elements alone are sufficient. Instead, I defend the view that each of them is necessary.

are humbly proud of their abilities. The third section introduces the social psychological notion of an attitude and identifies three forms of self-esteem: defensive, damaged and secure. Section four argues that self-trust is sensitive to agents' appraisals of their vulnerability to threats. These evaluations are among the constituents of subjects' self-esteem (i.e, their attitudes to the self). Finally, section five details why the self-trust resulting from secure self-esteem is well-placed whilst the self-trust characteristic of arrogance, and the mistrust typical of servility and timidity, are ill-placed.

### 1. Intellectual self-trust

In this section I argue that intellectual self-trust conceived as a three-place relation between agents, their faculties, and a domain or context is composed of at least three elements.

These are: first, a propensity to rely on one's epistemic faculties and abilities (which are implicitly taken as reliable); second, a tendency to be confident in one's will power; third, a disposition to experience positive epistemic feelings.<sup>5</sup> I show that each of these three elements of self-trust plays a distinctive role in intellectual inquiry. Reliance on one's epistemic faculties is necessary to carry out any investigation; confidence in the strength of one's will is required to persevere in one's endeavours; finally, epistemic feelings of certainty and doubt provide essential guidance when deciding whether to continue or terminate one's examination of the issues. In this section I make no distinction between intellectual self-trust that is well-placed or misplaced, I return to the issue in the final section of the paper where I explain why the self-trust of those who are humbly self-confident is warranted, but the self-satisfied trust that the arrogant places in himself is not.

First and foremost, intellectual self-trust is a form of reliance on one's epistemic faculties such as memory or perception, one's intellectual abilities such as mathematical or writing skills, and on the accuracy of one's belief system. The person who trusts herself intellectually relies on these features not to let her down. She implicitly takes them to be reliable and also to be suited to the intellectual challenges that she must face. If confronted

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<sup>5</sup> In what follows my talk of self-trust in one's abilities or in the strength of one's will should be read as a shorthand for trust in one's own abilities in most contexts and domains.

with an easy task such as the addition of small numbers, she deploys her mental arithmetical skills without feeling the need to verify the result by using a calculator. When faced with harder problems, she chooses strategies for solving them that she thinks are suitable. These may include consulting an expert or engaging in extensive investigation of the relevant issues. In sum, her behaviour manifests a reliance in her faculties, skills, and relevant beliefs that consists in taking these as suitable means to find truthful answers to the intellectual questions which interest her. This person may also be aware of vulnerabilities. She does not think that her reasoning skills or her memory are perfect, but she fully expects that they reliably deliver accurate outcomes. Hence, the self-trusting individual does not fret or endlessly double-check her judgment.

Second, the person who trusts herself in matters of the intellect is also confident in her will power. She trusts herself to last the course. She relies on her capacity to stick to the intellectual endeavours upon which she embarks. Intellectual inquiry often requires that one focus on a single task and avoid distractions; it is frequently painstaking and time-consuming. Thus, concentration and perseverance are crucial to success in intellectual activities. The person who trusts herself, therefore, in addition to treating her epistemic faculties as being up to the task of acquiring knowledge, also takes herself to be able to control her mental activities in order to carry out her plans and projects to their conclusion.

Thus, self-trust is a cluster of behavioural dispositions that exhibit an implicit reliance on one's faculties and skills to deliver true outcomes and that manifest confidence on one's will to exercise the kind of control required to execute one's problem-solving strategies. Success in one's inquiries requires strength of commitment to one's plans, realistic goal-setting, as well as suitable and reliable epistemic faculties and abilities.<sup>6</sup> The person who is intellectually talented because her faculties are reliable may achieve very little if she sets goals for which her talents are not suited. For instance, a gifted mathematician may not succeed in her inquiry because she stubbornly refuses computer assistance in her attempts to prove a complex conjecture. She may also fail despite choosing good problem-solving strategies and possessing reliable epistemic faculties, if she is often distracted and gives up too soon. However, the individual who through sheer strength of will perseveres in her

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<sup>6</sup> I do not assume that self-trust *per se* is a virtue. Instead, I presume that it consists of a cluster of dispositions which are minimally required to carry out any inquiry.

inquiries may also get nowhere if her faculties are not very reliable or she has set unrealistic goals.

These two facets of self-trust, therefore, may come apart. Some may trust their intellectual competence but mistrust their will power. Hence, for example, the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi as a young child was said to have asked his tutors to tie him to his chair because he did not trust himself not to want to wander off. At the same time he had no doubt that his intellectual abilities were up to the task. Conversely, one may trust one's ability to persevere but have reservations about one's intellectual prowess.<sup>7</sup>

These distinct elements of intellectual self-trust may also exhibit different relations of dependence. The person who trusts herself relies on her faculties and abilities in the same manner in which she relies on telescopes or microscopes. She takes these to be suitable to the task and treats them as reliable. She adopts an optimistic stance toward them by having predictive expectations that they will deliver. In short, our trust in our faculties is trust as mere reliance.<sup>8</sup> This is why, while our trust in them may be disappointed, it cannot be betrayed. If a person trusts her memory which turns out to be unreliable, it would seem apt for her to regret the trust she put in her cognitive faculties, but resentment would be inappropriate.<sup>9</sup>

The relation of dependence that the self-trusting individual has to her will is not that of mere reliance. Rather it exhibits the features of trust as confidence. The person who trusts her will, but is let down feels disappointed in herself. However, she may also plausibly feel betrayed by herself because she has failed to live up to her commitments. Such a person does not merely expect, in the sense of predict, that she possesses enough self-discipline to persevere in her endeavours. She also expects, in the sense of commit, to follow on and execute the plans that she has set for herself. Hence, intellectual self-trust includes confidence in one's will power understood to include reliance in one's ability to commit and

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<sup>7</sup> I include confidence in the strength of one's will as part of intellectual self-trust because I take it to be the kind of trust required to carry out with some degree of success one's intellectual activities.

<sup>8</sup> Much more would need to be said to substantiate this point. My discussion below of the role of epistemic feelings indirectly speaks to this issue but does not fully address it. Be that as it may, it is generally agreed that intellectual self-trust at least involves reliance on one's epistemic faculties.

<sup>9</sup> The distinction between disappointed and betrayed trust was first developed by Baier (1994). I owe to Jones (2004) the idea that trust as mere reliance requires only predictive expectations that what one trusts will deliver.

to fulfil one's commitments.<sup>10</sup> In what follows I largely ignore the distinction between these two kinds of reliance since my focus in this chapter lies primarily with the third component of intellectual self-trust which is a disposition to experience positive epistemic feelings.

There is more to self-trust than reliance on one's faculties and abilities and confidence in the strength of one's will. A person may possess these dispositions and yet fail to trust herself. For instance, imagine a person who, on her way to the airport, keeps checking that her passport is in her bag.<sup>11</sup> She knows it is there since she distinctly remembers seeing it. This person does not genuinely believe that her memory is not reliable; nevertheless, she cannot help feeling anxious over the whereabouts of her documents.<sup>12</sup> This individual may be confident in the strength of her will and rely on her faculties, which she fully believes to be reliable. Nevertheless, she cannot shake this anxious doubt. In these circumstances, this person may steel herself -give herself a talking to- and resolve to stop checking. If her trust in her will is well-placed, she may succeed in regulating her behaviour. We may now imagine that a person who often finds herself in this kind of predicament can successfully resolve never to give in to her anxious feelings. She thus develops new habits despite, at least for a while, continuing to experience epistemic anxiety. This person has dispositions to rely on her faculties, and the confidence to trust her will power, but she has not fully shaken her self-mistrust.

I do not know whether those who suffer from compulsions of this sort can in reality adopt the resolute stance of ignoring their feelings, relying on their faculties and being confident in their will-power. The mere conceptual possibility of the resolute, but mistrusting, individual is sufficient to show that intellectual self-trust requires more than reliance on one's abilities and faculties, and confidence in the strength of one's will. It also includes an affective dimension. In order to trust oneself one must also often experience epistemic feelings of certainty and truth regarding the deliverances of one's epistemic faculties.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Hinchman (2017) for an exploration of some of these themes.

<sup>11</sup> I owe the example to Jones (2012).

<sup>12</sup> De Sousa (2008, pp. 197-98) suggests that in these cases one remembers having done what one is anxious about, for instance, putting the passport in the bag. One may even be sure that one's memory is correct and yet be unable to shake a feeling of uncertainty.

<sup>13</sup> There is a small literature on epistemic or noetic feelings. In addition to De Sousa (2008) prominent discussions include Proust (2013), Dokic (2012), Arango-Muñoz and Michaelian (2014), and Carruthers (2017). My discussion below makes it clear why these are not best thought as intellectual seemings.

I have claimed above that intellectual self-trust consists of at least three elements: a tendency to rely on one's intellectual faculties and abilities, a disposition to count on one's strength of will, together with a propensity to experience positive epistemic feelings about some of one's beliefs. These three elements of self-trust are supplemented in reflective mature human beings by beliefs about the level of one's intellectual competence and about one's capacity for self-discipline. Intuitively, however, these beliefs about one's own cognitions do not seem to be an essential component of self-trust because young children and other creatures that lack the cognitive tools for reflective self-knowledge nevertheless are capable of some form of self-trust.

It may be objected that examples concerning individuals suffering from epistemic anxiety do not support the conclusion that positive affect is an essential element of self-trust. One may argue that we can explain these cases by attributing inconsistent beliefs to the anxious. The person who continually verifies whether her passport is in her bag believes, based on her memory, that it is there. However, one may interpret her as also believing that the passport may not be in her bag. Her feeling of uncertainty would be a manifestation of this contradiction in her belief system. If this is right, intellectual self-trust would not require the presence of feelings of confidence, certainty or correctness. Instead, the absence of feelings of doubt, anxiety or uncertainty indicating an underlying inconsistency in one's belief system would be sufficient.

This objection misrepresents the dynamic of the family of examples under consideration. Those who are in the thrall of epistemic anxiety do not persist in checking whether the deliverance of their memory is accurate because they also believe that it is unreliable. Rather these are cases where individuals find it difficult to terminate their inquiries and to take the question they are trying to address as settled.<sup>14</sup> The reason why they cannot stop is that they implicitly set the standards of evidence required to reach a conclusion unreasonably high. Epistemically anxious individuals take the deliverances of memory to be reasonably reliable. Nevertheless, they feel that memory must be supplemented with the

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<sup>14</sup> I owe to Jennifer Nagel (2010) this notion of epistemic anxiety as the feeling that current available evidence is insufficient to warrant full belief so that further investigation is necessary. In this paper I reserve the label 'epistemic anxiety' for cases where this feeling persists even though one possesses enough evidence to stop worrying. Kurth (2018), instead, uses 'practical anxiety' to refer to feelings of uncertainty prompting reflection which may often be warranted.

additional evidence provided by perception. They proceed in this manner within contexts in which memory alone would satisfy other agents. Their anxious behaviour is not based on inconsistent beliefs about the required standards of evidence. Rather, they would endorse the claim that the testimony of memory is sufficient for confident belief in this instance. Nonetheless, they experience a feeling of unrest which prompts them to carry out additional checks.

One may also object that, although something must motivate agents to initiate and terminate their inquiries, this function may be fulfilled by mental states other than feelings. In response, I wish to show that this role cannot be played in every instance by rational deliberation. We cannot always deliberate about when to stop deliberating since such a process would give rise to an unstoppable regress.<sup>15</sup> Suppose I am trying to ascertain whether  $p$ , and I have evidence in support of  $p$ . If the evidence is sufficient, my investigation could stop and I could take myself to know that  $p$ . But in order to halt the deliberating process, I need to consider whether the evidence for  $p$  is sufficient to bring the process to an end. Suppose now that I deliberate about this question. I have some evidence that my evidence about  $p$  is quite strong, but is that evidence about the strength of my evidence itself sufficient to stop my deliberation about whether to stop deliberating whether  $p$ ? Well, I could deliberate about that also. As it should be clear, given that this deliberative process cannot be halted by deliberation alone, since each deliberative step generates another step dedicated to its evaluation.

Presumably, decisions to terminate inquiries and take their deliverances to settle the issue are not arbitrary. So they are not mere decisions. They must be grounded on appraisals or evaluations of whether the evidence in one's possession is sufficient. These evaluations, as I have argued, cannot themselves be based exclusively on deliberations. They must therefore be also grounded on something else. Sometimes investigations are largely carried out without much conscious reflection about one's problem-solving strategy. In these cases, the halting mechanisms that terminate inquiries may well be automatic and not conscious. But in other instances we need to make conscious choices about whether to stop an investigation. Since the decision is hopefully not wholly arbitrary and cannot be exclusively

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<sup>15</sup> What I have in mind is not a regress of justification but a regress in the process of ascertaining whether one is justified.



based on deliberation, it must be guided by intuitions or gut feelings. These are often experienced as epistemic feelings of ease, competence, certainty or confidence.

These feelings are sensitive to heuristic cues which are indicative of the accuracy, truth, validity or reliability of doxastic states and cognitive processes. In this manner feelings are sources of information about the epistemic properties of mental states and processes although their contents are not represented by the feelings. For example, feelings of ease or fluency in processing usually generate an impression of truth or validity (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). The rationale for this heuristic is that fluency indicates familiarity or frequency which, in turn, is some evidence of truth. The idea is that if a claim is frequently encountered, it must be widely held in society. Further, widespread consensus is at least *prima facie* evidence of truth. For this reason, claims whose processing feels easy, and sounds familiar, also feel truer than claims that are harder to process. Sadly, this heuristics is easily manipulated by engendering fluency by means of spurious variables, such as font size or background colour. Nonetheless it can be epistemically valuable in a vast range of circumstances.

The conclusion that self-trust should include at least these three components (as well as an additional doxastic element in self-reflective mature human beings) is supported by the foundational role played by self-trust in all intellectual pursuits. Some kind of pre-reflective self-trust must already be in place if we are to carry out any inquiry. Without it we would be paralysed. But any intellectual investigation presupposes three distinct capacities: the ability to form beliefs by means of reason, perception, memory or any combination of our faculties; the ability to persist until one has reached a conclusion; the ability to recognise whether one's answer is adequate to settle the issue.

Intellectual self-trust, therefore, consists of our propensities to rely on those aspects of our cognitive lives (cognitive capacities, will, and affect) that make our epistemic inquiries possible. Our reliance on, and confidence in, these aspects of the self is pre-reflective. We trust that they are apt to the task of giving us truthful answers and accurate solutions to intellectual puzzles even though we do not possess independent evidence of their reliability, effectiveness or accuracy. No independent evidence is available because we need to trust our capacities to discover whether those same capacities are trustworthy (Cf., Zagzebski, 2012, p. 49). In short, as Alston (2005) argued, any attempt to justify our beliefs in the

reliability of our belief-forming faculties ultimately suffers from epistemic circularity.<sup>16</sup> I address the question whether pre-reflective self-trust can be warranted in the final section of this chapter. For now, suffices it to say that self-trust is inevitable if we are to engage in any kind of investigation.

## 2. Virtuous and vicious types of intellectual self-confidence.

In this section I turn to a description of three different stances or attitudes that an individual may take toward her own ability to engage successfully in epistemic activities. These are: the optimistic confidence exhibited by those who are humbly proud of their achievements; the self-satisfied and smug confidence of those who are arrogant; the pessimistic outlook characteristic of individuals who are intellectually obsequious or timid. In the final section of this paper, I explain why arrogant self-trust and obsequious mistrust are epistemically vicious, while optimistic self-trust is virtuous.

Intellectual arrogance is generally associated with overbearing or self-satisfied confidence. Here I wish to highlight five behaviours typical of those who possess this character trait: extreme self-confidence, feelings of invulnerability, superior attitudes, self-satisfaction or smugness, and a propensity to anger.<sup>17</sup>

First, individuals who arrogant are often full of themselves. They appear supremely confident and come across as cocky. They give the impression of believing that they know it

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<sup>16</sup> These considerations are undoubtedly too quick since one may be able to rely on one epistemic faculty to assess the reliability of another. Whilst I have doubt about the viability of this strategy, addressing this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>17</sup> These behaviours are manifestations of arrogance but do not define it. Someone may on occasion exhibit them, and thus behave arrogantly, without being arrogant. This conduct might be, for example, an attempt to deal with a hostile environment.

all and that they are right on every issue. They appear certain of their views, and seem to overestimate the degree to which others agree with them.<sup>18</sup>

Second, some arrogant individuals behave as if they were invulnerable to threats. They may in a detached manner calculate risks accurately, but fail to feel their salience to their own case. They are aware of the possibility of failure and disappointment but they experience it as a mere possibility that does not need to be factored in their decisions. Hence, despite knowing about possible pitfalls, they are prepared to take enormous risks.

Third, arrogant people usually feel superior to others and act accordingly. They tend to behave as if no one could possibly teach them anything. They largely ignore the views of other people, and they dismiss any criticism raised against them. Although arrogant individuals feel superior to other people, this feeling need not be accompanied by a belief in one's superiority. A person may be able to judge that he is not actually cleverer than everybody else; nevertheless, he might in the heat of discussion always end up believing that his arguments are better, his position more interesting, than anything put forward by others. Conversely, a person may believe, rightly or wrongly, that he is intellectually superior to other members of his epistemic community without necessarily being arrogant.<sup>19</sup> For instance, he may be accurate in his judgement or he may have made an honest mistake.

Fourth, arrogant people usually appear to be very pleased with themselves. They seem to gain more pleasure from having the last word than from discovering the truth. They always give the impression that they care more about the feelings of self-satisfaction they gain from any success, than about the objective worth of their achievements.

Fifth, arrogant individuals are prone to anger. They take criticisms very badly as if they were personal affronts. They seem to arrogate for themselves the right not to be challenged, and thus consider disagreements as failures to acknowledge their privileges.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> There are circumstances in which arrogant individuals may mask these tendencies to avoid social sanctions. That said, arrogance often manifests itself in a belief that common norms, including those of politeness, do not apply to oneself.

<sup>19</sup> I have argued for this point in my Tanesini (2016b)

<sup>20</sup> I have discussed the privileges that arrogant individuals arrogate for themselves in my (2016a).

These five manifestations of arrogance offer evidence in support of the view that arrogance is associated with a special kind of supreme self-confidence which can be described as self-satisfied self-trust.

It is instructive to contrast arrogant self-trust with the optimistic stance adopted by those who are proud of their abilities but acknowledge their limitations.<sup>21</sup> The optimist exhibits self-trust since she relies on her faculties and is confident of her will-power. However, unlike the arrogant person, she is not a cocky know-it-all. Instead, there are occasions when she experiences feelings of doubt and uncertainty. She does not attempt to deny their existence, but treats them as a motive to seek to improve. Further, the optimist is not crippled by anxiety or fear that she may not be up to the task.

In addition, the person who is intellectually self-confident without being arrogant is not likely to experience feelings of superiority. She is proud of her achievements without exhibiting the smugness that is typical of the arrogant. In ordinary circumstances, she is open-minded in her response to criticisms, whilst remaining steadfast in her views when she feels certain about them.

Whilst intellectual arrogance is associated with a kind of self-confidence that is overbearing in its smugness, those vices - such as intellectual timidity and obsequiousness - that are in some sense opposed to arrogance are characterised by the lack of confidence typical of self-mistrust.

Individuals who are intellectually servile, or who are timid, lack self-confidence. They have a negative stance toward their intellectual abilities which they expect, in the sense of predict, not to be up to the challenges of intellectual inquiry. This inability to trust their faculties is likely to be associated with frequent experiences of epistemic feelings of doubt or uncertainty. In the more severe cases this lack of confidence can take the form of crippling epistemic anxiety that makes one feel that one has never accumulated sufficient evidence to make up one's mind. In addition, these feelings of uncertainty often are taken not as an incentive to improve but as evidence that one is stupid and unable to do better. Thus, at

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<sup>21</sup> See my (2018) the view that intellectual humility requires pride in one's abilities as well as acceptance of one's limitations.

least in those who are intellectually timid, lack of self-confidence manifests itself not merely in an expectation of failure, but also as resignation to it as inevitable and unchangeable.

People who suffer from servility or timidity have heightened awareness of their vulnerabilities.<sup>22</sup> They do not expect, in the sense of predict, their abilities and faculties to serve them well consistently and on matters of importance. Those who are timid primarily respond to this awareness with fear of the harms that may accrue to them as a result. Intellectually servile individuals react to these perceived shortcomings by developing an increased sense of dependency on others to supply the answers to any questions that they may have.<sup>23</sup>

If arrogant people feel superior, those who are obsequious suffer from feelings of inferiority. They have a tendency to capitulate in the face of criticism because they feel that others must be right, since they are better than them. Thus, intellectually servile individuals tend to defer too uncritically to the views put forward by other people. On their own they are very unsure of their views, and because of their persistent feelings of uncertainty may become prone to endless rumination about what to believe or do.

In addition, those who are obsequious seem to derive any sense of self-confidence that they may have from others' judgments of their abilities. Thus, they turn themselves into 'yes-men' who always agree with those whom they are very keen to please and ingratiate themselves to.

Finally, if arrogant individuals are prone to anger, those who are timid are dominated by fear. They have negative expectations of their abilities, and are afraid that their weaknesses (as they perceive them) may be apparent to others who may exploit these in order to harm them.

Whilst more could be said about each of these types of intellectual self-confidence and lack of it, these brief characterisations are hopefully sufficient to home in on different kinds of personality each of which exhibits a different sort of self-trust or mistrust.

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<sup>22</sup> These two vices are different in several respects. Here I focus on similarities before highlighting some differences below.

<sup>23</sup> It should not be presumed that they are confident in their ability to detect trustworthy sources. Rather, they accept the views of the majority or those of people the majority holds in high esteem.

### 3. Secure, defensive and damaged self-esteem

The three forms of self-trust discussed in the previous section are underpinned by three kinds of self-esteem, which I will outline in this section. Social psychologists label them as secure, defensive, and damaged. I will argue that these kinds of self-esteem, respectively, underpin optimistic self-trust, intellectual arrogance, and intellectual servility and timidity.

Self-esteem can be thought of either as a transient state of momentary self-confidence or as a trait reflective of a stable self-evaluation. It can be global when it concerns the self as a whole, or domain-specific when it assesses the self, for example, for its competence or for its likeability. Social psychologists often think of self-esteem as an attitude directed toward the self (Zeigler-Hill, 2013).

Attitudes are defined by psychologists as associations of valences (positive or negative) with representations of attitude objects. Attitudes are summary evaluations which are based on information supplied by one's evaluative beliefs about an object, one's emotional and affective responses to it, as well as one's behavioral dispositions with regard to that object based on past experiences. Attitudes thus function as cognitive shortcuts; they help subjects to call to mind how they feel about, or evaluate, something - including oneself - without having to reconsider each time afresh all the relevant evidence (Maio & Haddock, 2015).

Attitudes can be measured explicitly or implicitly (Maio & Haddock, 2015). Explicit measures of attitudes are direct and include self-reports and answers to questionnaires using Likert scales. Self-esteem measures may include asking subjects whether they agree with statements about their likeability or their competence. They are intended to measure subjects' positive or negative conscious self-evaluations. By contrast, implicit measures of attitudes are indirect; they measure attitudes by measuring factors associated with them. These measures include evaluative priming and implicit association tests (IATs). With regard to self-esteem, psychologists often rely on the name-letter test (NLT) (when participants are asked how much they like the first letter of their first name) and the name-liking effect

(when subjects are asked how much they like their name) to measure self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2010). Individuals who like their name or its first letter are said to have high self-esteem as implicitly measured. Implicit measures of self-esteem are poorly correlated, raising concerns about the validity of the construct (Bosson et al., 2000).<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, each of these measures has predictive value and thus cautious reliance on them is generally thought to be appropriate.

My focus in this chapter is on one kind of congruent self-esteem – namely secure high self-esteem - and two kinds of discrepant self-esteem: defensive high, and damaged. Secure self-esteem is the kind of trait self-esteem typical of those who are positive about the competence and/or likeability of the self when their attitudes are measured explicitly and also implicitly (Jordan et al., 2003).<sup>25</sup> Defensive or fragile high self-esteem is characteristic of individuals whose self-esteem is positive when measured explicitly but is negative when measured indirectly (Haddock & Gebauer, 2011; Jordan et al., 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Damaged self-esteem pertains to individuals whose self-esteem is negative when measured explicitly but positive when it is measured implicitly (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a).<sup>26</sup>

Secure self-esteem has been associated with a number of positive outcomes including: psychological health, life satisfaction and persistence at difficult tasks (Jordan et al., 2003). This kind of self-esteem is said to be secure because it is not a mask or a defense hiding underlying insecurities. Those whose high self-esteem is secure are also less subject to fluctuations over time about their levels of self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill, 2006). They are less prone endlessly and inconclusively mulling things over (Phillips & Hine, 2016) and more disposed to trust their intuitions (Jordan et al., 2007).

Defensive or fragile self-esteem is generally thought to be predictive of behaviours which are intuitively associated with arrogance. These include: a predisposition to anger (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a) and aggression (McGregor et al., 2005); a tendency to boast (Olson et al., 2007) and to self-enhance (Bosson et al., 2003); and higher levels of social prejudice (Jordan et al., 2005). Defensiveness and heightened vigilance to real or imagined

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<sup>24</sup> This fact alone should not be taken as sufficient evidence that the two kinds of measures tap into distinct constructs (Cf., Buhrmester et al., 2011; Olson et al., 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Thus these two measures are congruent.

<sup>26</sup> In these cases there are discrepancies in the measures of self-esteem.

threats are the most distinctive characteristics of this kind of self-esteem (Haddock & Gebauer, 2011). Individuals whose high self-esteem is defensive experience their own sense of self-worth and competence as being under threat; they respond to this perceived potential harm in an aggressive manner. In short, their high self-esteem is a defense mechanism that hides underlying insecurities about the self.

Damaged self-esteem has received less attention in the psychological literature than either secure or defensive self-esteem. Nevertheless, there is evidence that individuals whose self-esteem is damaged exhibit some of the behaviors that are characteristic either of servility or of timidity. For example, they attribute any success that they may have either to good luck or to the limited difficulty of the task, but see any failures as a consequence of their lack of ability (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a).<sup>27</sup> They are also more nervous and have worse physical health (as measured by the number of sick days) than other people (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a). They are very sensitive to social rejection and live with persistent feelings of personal inadequacy (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007b). Researchers have concluded that individuals whose self-esteem is damaged feel constantly under threat and are rather defensive as a result. Their anger, however tends to be suppressed rather than expressed (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a). In addition there is evidence of a correlation between low self-esteem and behavior that seeks to ingratiate oneself to powerful others (Wu et al., 2011).<sup>28</sup>

In sum, there is empirical evidence linking secure high self-esteem to some manifestations of optimistic self-trust, intellectually arrogant behaviors to defensive high self-esteem, and conduct which exhibits intellectual servility and timidity to damaged self-esteem.

#### 4. Self-esteem as underpinning self-confidence

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<sup>27</sup> These tendencies are usually labeled as depressive attributional style.

<sup>28</sup> There is some evidence in the empirical literature to suggest that individuals whose self-esteem is damaged are responsive to positive encouragement (Jordan et al., 2013; Spencer et al., 2005). If this is right, this kind of self-esteem does not conform to the resigned outlook I have attributed to intellectually timid individuals. It may be more in keeping with the stance adopted by those who are intellectually servile and responsive to the positive feedback of those whom they try to ingratiate.



The framework of attitude psychology can help to explain the three kinds of self-trust which I have described as optimistic, self-satisfied and pessimistic, respectively. It can also reveal the basic psychological mechanisms that underpin intellectual self-trust. Whilst self-trust itself is a complex hybrid cluster of three-place relations of dependence between an agent, some aspects of her psychology, and some domains or contexts of inquiry, it is causally dependent on a more basic evaluative appraisal of the self (i.e., self-esteem) which moderates subjects' reliance on their faculties, confidence in their will, and dispositions to experience epistemic feelings of certainty or of doubt.<sup>29</sup> My aim in this section is to argue that optimistic, self-satisfied and pessimistic intellectual self-trust are respectively expressions of secure, defensive and damaged self-esteem. Since both defensive and damaged self-esteem are associated with heightened alertness to threats, it is hardly surprising that intense awareness of one's vulnerability has profound effects on individuals' ability to trust their own intellectual abilities.<sup>30</sup>

I have mentioned above that both defensive and damaged self-esteem are associated with increased vigilance to threats, and a tendency to perceive situations as threatening. Individuals with discrepant forms of self-esteem are extremely good at detecting threats to the self, but are also prone to interpreting situations as threatening when they are not (Haddock & Gebauer, 2011). It is extremely plausible therefore that these individuals are especially alert to any possible vulnerability they may have.

Those whose self-esteem is defensive have high self-esteem as explicitly measured. It is likely that implicit measures that show their self-esteem to be low reveal their insecurities. These individuals would respond to this feeling of vulnerability by "bigging themselves up". Explicit measures of self-esteem would thus tap on to the protective conception of the self that these individuals have built up as a defensive response to their underlying insecurity. Those whose self-esteem is damaged, by contrast, show their vulnerability overtly and report feeling nervous and stressed (Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a). In both cases the evidence

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<sup>29</sup> Kidd's (2016) view that intellectual humility is broadly speaking a virtue calibrating confidence in one's intellectual capacities, those of one's peers, and in the fruitfulness of one's tradition bears some deep connections to the position that I present here.

<sup>30</sup> The view that self-trust presupposes basic self-esteem is also defended by Govier in her (1993).

suggests that discrepant self-esteem is closely related to conscious or non-conscious heightened sensitivity to the vulnerability of one's sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

Trait self-esteem is a stable cluster of attitudes toward the self and aspects of it which are central to one's self-understanding. These attitudes are not identical to the dispositions constitutive of self-trust or mistrust. Rather they underpin them, since the attitudes are causally responsible, together with situational and other factors, for the manifestations of self-trusting or mistrusting dispositions. That is, attitudes are the psychological properties that explain why people have dispositions to behave and feel in the ways which are characteristic of self-trust or mistrust. In short, if self-trust is a complex disposition, self-esteem is among its causal bases.

Optimistic self-trust presupposes that one does not experience one's sense of self-worth as being under threat. It is only if one appraises oneself as being competent without feeling that this competence is at risk, that one can stably rely on one's faculties, feelings and on the strength of one's self-discipline. We can think of well-placed or secure self-trust as something that one can possibly develop only if one generally feels that what matters to one is not constantly in danger.

However, when individuals have defensive attitudes toward the self, they are disposed to perceive many aspects of their surroundings as potentially threatening. Hence, they consciously or non-consciously feel that their identity is continually under threat. These individuals cannot adopt an optimistic stance about their abilities, since they have a heightened sensitivity to the vulnerability of their self-esteem. The absence of a secure sense of self-worth should be expected to impede the formation of those dispositions, commitments and feelings that are constitutive of self-trust.<sup>31</sup>

Defensive and damaged self-esteem are two possible responses to this basic sense of insecurity. Defensive self-esteem is tantamount to the pursuit of a strategy of denial.<sup>32</sup> Those whose self-esteem is defensive cover up their vulnerabilities by developing an inflated - albeit unstable - sense of self-worth as a defensive shield. This interpretation of

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<sup>31</sup> I owe the idea that trust depends on a more basic sense of safety to Jones (2004). In that paper, however, Jones does not consider the possibility that some forms of self-satisfied self-trust may also emerge as a response to an heightened feeling of vulnerability.

<sup>32</sup> These individuals have highest rate of self-deception (Jordan et al., 2003, pp. 975-6).

defensive self-esteem as a defensive mechanism to boost one's own sense of self-worth in order to banish feelings of insecurity helps to explain why self-satisfied self-trust is a distinctive manifestation of intellectual arrogance. Those who are arrogant attempt to compensate for an overactive feeling of vulnerability by developing a high opinion of themselves. They thus appear exceedingly self-confident. However, these feelings of superiority and invulnerability serve the function of enhancing a sense of self which is always at risk of being overwhelmed by insecurities. The defensive or self-enhancing function of arrogant self-confidence explains why it comes across as self-satisfying. Its sole purpose is to make the arrogant individual feel good about himself.

Individuals whose self-esteem is damaged, by contrast, are aware of their vulnerabilities; this awareness is reflected in their conscious low opinions of their own global worth and competence. This heightened sense of vulnerability makes it hard for these individuals to develop an appropriate form of self-trust. This mistrust of one's own abilities in my opinion may take two distinct forms, although many individuals may exemplify both at the same time. The first is intellectual timidity, which consists in a resigned acceptance of one's own alleged shortcomings. Those who are timid adopt the depressive attributional style of interpreting failures as a consequence of their own lack of ability, and interpreting successes as due to good fortune or to other properties of the situation external to the self. The second is intellectual servility which consists in a response to vulnerability by seeking to ingratiate oneself to more powerful others so as to be accepted in their social group, and perhaps bask in their glory.

The relation between attitudes to the self and the constituents of self-trust is not unidirectional. The dispositions to rely (or not) on one's epistemic faculties, to be confident or unconfident in one's will, and to have positive or negative epistemic feelings feed into the process of revising attitudes. For example, a person who often experiences feelings of doubt about her beliefs, may take these feelings as evidence of the unreliability of her reasoning. She may as a result revise down her estimate of the trustworthiness of some of her epistemic faculties. This appraisal in turn may lead her to revise in a negative direction her attitudes toward herself.

What we have here is a kind epistemic circularity in appraisal that mirrors the deliberative epistemic circularity highlighted by Alston (2005). We base our pre-reflective self-appraisals

of the trustworthiness of our faculties and will on pre-existing evaluations of the self's vulnerability to threats. However, self-esteem is in turn responsive to dispositions to trust our faculties and will. In the next section, I highlight how this mutual dependency can lead to secure self-trust which is calibrated to the trustworthiness of those aspects of the self that one trusts. Alternatively, with regard to self-satisfied trust and mistrust this interdependence can lead to increasing decalibration.

## 5. Well-placed and ill-founded self-trust.

So far I have argued that optimistic self-trust flows from, and sustains, secure self-esteem. I have shown that it differs both from self-satisfied self-trust, which is associated with defensive self-esteem, and from pessimistic self-mistrust, that is closely related to damaged self-esteem. In this section, I argue that the first kind of trust is apt or calibrated and that the remaining two are unwarranted or decalibrated.

There is substantial evidence that individuals whose attitudes (including those directed at the self) serve defensive purposes have a propensity to engage in cognition that is biased by a motive of self-defense. Individuals whose self-esteem is defensive tend to discount evidence contrary to their inflated self-conception and seek evidence in support of their high self-esteem. I have already noted that these individuals have the highest rate of self-delusion (Jordan et al., 2003). Two styles of thinking characteristic of defensive high self-esteem are especially illuminating in this context. First, individuals with this form of self-esteem gauge their level of ability by comparing themselves to others (Mussweiler & Rüter, 2003).<sup>33</sup> However, when offered the opportunity these individuals prefer to compare themselves to people whose level of attainment is low, so that they can seem accomplished in comparison (Vohs & Heatherton, 2004). If forced to compare themselves to high achievers, defensive high self-esteem individuals will do so by seeking evidence that they

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<sup>33</sup> This strategy is not exclusive to this category of individuals but is widely adopted.

are similar to these exemplars. Because of a shared human tendency to confirmation bias, these comparisons result in unrealistically positive self-evaluations (Corcoran et al., 2011).

Second, when faced with a difficult task that may force them to form a realistic view of their competence, these individuals often opt for self-sabotage. Instead of applying themselves to a challenge by practicing and putting some effort, these people often prefer not to prepare. In this way they are able to attribute failure to lack of application, and any unlikely success to their innate talents (Lupien et al., 2010). What these results strongly suggest is that people whose high self-esteem is defensive are likely to form attitudes about their abilities that are out of step with reality. These delusive attitudes inform their behaviour, their confidence in their strength of will, and their epistemic feelings of certainty. As a result their self-trust is not calibrated to the trustworthiness of their faculties and abilities. Further, since the dispositions that constitute self-trust in turn contribute to the information agents use to update their attitudes, these inputs are likely to set in motion a process of decalibration that causes subjects' self-appraisal to become increasingly inaccurate.

Individuals whose self-esteem is damaged are also prone to processes that decalibrate their self-assessments of their own intellectual skills and abilities. They prefer to compare themselves to people whom they think are better than they are, thus confirming their low opinion of themselves. Further, if forced to compare themselves with individuals of limited abilities, they do so by seeking evidence that they are similar to them (Vohs & Heatherton, 2004). These comparisons are likely to produce inaccurate results and lead these individuals to evaluate themselves as being less intellectually able than they are. These assessments are then likely to contribute to the development of mistrustful dispositions and epistemic feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt. Further, these dispositions and feelings in turn feed into novel assessments of the self, giving rise to a downward spiral of ever lower self-esteem as explicitly measured. That said, individuals whose implicit self-esteem is high and who suffer from low explicitly measured self-esteem are responsive to positive feedback and thus able to reverse this downward trend (Jordan et al., 2013).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Attempts to reduce the cognitive dissonance created by discrepant self-esteem may also contribute to these processes. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the role of cognitive dissonance and harmony for well-placed and ill-founded intellectual self-trust. See Zagzebski (2012) for a discussion of rationality as dissonance reduction. For objections to Zagzebski see Fricker (2016). As should be clear from the above in my

These considerations show why self-satisfied trust and pessimistic mistrust are unwarranted. They are integral parts of appraisals that serve motives of defensiveness rather than accuracy, and which lead those who engage in them to develop dispositions to rely (or not) on their faculties and abilities. These dispositions do not reflect the reliability of these psychological components of the self and do not serve those who have them, since they obstruct their ability to engage in inquiries that effectively lead to knowledge. For example, such people may experience feelings of certainty and of doubt which are not sensitive to the epistemic status of the beliefs and problem-solving strategies that they assess (Clarkson et al., 2009; Schröder-Abé et al., 2007a); they may also exhibit a tendency to be uncertain of their intuitions (Jordan et al., 2007). Given their role in obstructing knowledge-conducive and responsible inquiry, these forms of self-trust are aptly characterised as vicious.<sup>35</sup>

Whilst high or low self-esteem that is motivated by defensive mechanisms has disabling effects on intellectual self-trust, high self-esteem which is secure serves as a pre-requisite for trusting attitudes that are broadly accurate or well-placed. There is evidence that individuals whose high self-esteem is secure respond to negative feedback about their performance with added motivation to do well (Lambird & Mann, 2006). These same individuals show more persistence when faced with a difficult task and are able to exercise better self-control than less secure individuals (Vohs et al., 2005). These considerations suggest that individuals whose self-esteem is secure are able to regulate their mental activities and to form reasonably accurate evaluations of their abilities. In addition, they possess both the motivations to improve and to persevere that are essential elements of becoming deserving of one's own self-trust. Since secure-self trust plays such an essential role in enabling inquiry that is knowledge-conducive, this kind of self-trust is aptly characterised as virtuous.<sup>36</sup>

In conclusion, in this paper I offered an account of three forms intellectual self-trust and mistrust and traced their sources to three varieties of self-esteem. I have argued that secure

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opinion dissonance reduction could drive decalibrating processes that take one further and further away from accurate self-assessments.

<sup>35</sup> The view that vices are obstacles to knowledge productive and responsible investigation has been defended by Cassam (2016).

<sup>36</sup> See Battaly (2016) for some characterisation of virtues as traits that reliably produce good effects.

high self-esteem grounds self-trusting dispositions that promote knowledge-conducive and responsible inquiry. I have also explained that defensive and damaged self-esteem facilitate the formation of dispositions to rely on one's epistemic faculties, to be confident in one's will, and to experience epistemic feelings, which inhibit successful epistemic activities. In this manner I have shown how some pathologies of self-trust can be explained as one manifestation of more encompassing intellectual character vices.<sup>37</sup>

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