

Claremont Colleges

Scholarship @ Claremont

CMC Senior Theses

CMC Student Scholarship

2022

The Wrongness of Belief: An Analysis of Rima Basu's Work on Doxastic Wronging

Sophie Gitlin

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses



Part of the [Epistemology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gitlin, Sophie, "The Wrongness of Belief: An Analysis of Rima Basu's Work on Doxastic Wronging" (2022). *CMC Senior Theses*. 2905.

https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/2905

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Claremont McKenna College

The Wrongness of Belief:

An Analysis of Rima Basu's Work on Doxastic Wronging

SUBMITTED TO

Professor Briana Toole

BY

Sophie Gitlin

FOR

Senior Thesis

Fall 2021

December 6th, 2021

Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Kris Anne and Michael Gitlin. I am forever grateful for their unwavering support in the pursuit of every passion I have found throughout my life.

I would like to thank Briana Toole for being much more than a thesis reader. I had the great fortune of working as a TA for Dr. B, and was inspired each and every class by her passion for making philosophy fun and accessible for young learners. She taught me about epistemology, but most importantly she taught me to love the process of learning.

Throughout my time at CMC, I have fallen in love with philosophy. This is thanks to the incredible professors that make up the CMC Philosophy Department. Every professor I have had the pleasure of learning from has made an impact on me, but James Kreines and Dustin Locke have stood out as pivotal figures in my experience; thank you for your mentorship.

This thesis is inspired by the thought provoking work Professor Rima Basu has created, and it would not have been possible without her insights that have challenged me to question my assumptions about the world.

Finally, thank you to my best friend Emma Kresch for spending hours upon hours talking about philosophy with me.

Introduction

It is undisputed that our actions have the power to wrong others; every decision we make that turns into action can directly or indirectly affect people. This sentiment is less obvious and less accepted when it comes to beliefs. There are three common arguments that some make to show beliefs and actions cannot be morally evaluated in the same way. First, is the difference in the level of control. We have some control over our actions - we have the ability to think critically about the effect our actions may have before we do them. We lack direct control over our beliefs. The order in which beliefs are formed and actions are taken explains the difference between them. Actions (unless we are inhibited in some way) are the result of our choices, we make decisions and then act upon them. Our beliefs are the opposite, we form them automatically before we are able to decide whether it was a good/true/fair belief or not. Second, beliefs can be a personal matter. If desired, beliefs are able to be hidden from others whereas actions are not afforded the same privacy. However, some argue fully private beliefs are very rare or impossible altogether (Smith 2011: 18). The third and final reason beliefs and actions are to be evaluated differently is the difference in potential for correction. When I treat someone badly, I can be called out, corrected, and learn from that correction. With beliefs that are kept private, there is no way to be called out, corrected, and therefore no way to learn. This makes changing harmful beliefs rare and challenging.

The harmfulness of beliefs is a central topic in epistemology, a branch of philosophy concerned with the scope of human knowledge and the beliefs we form based on that knowledge. Epistemology says that as humans with perception and the tools to understand the world, we have good reason to believe that things are the way they appear. Epistemology begins with two

assumptions: 1) there is a world; 2) we can know things. Beyond those assumptions, significant debate ensues.

The debate we are concerned with is about the moral and epistemic values that we place on our beliefs. There is a new wave of epistemologists arguing that our beliefs should be subject to moral evaluation. Many of these philosophers are advocates of moral encroachment, the idea that morals have influence over the justification of our beliefs (Basu 2021: 1). In other words, they think moral factors are relevant to the epistemic status of a belief. To prove this, moral encroachers must show that there are cases where beliefs can be epistemically flawless but still irrational if they are immoral. Others opt for a ‘facts not feelings’ approach called evidentialism, where what is rational to believe is based only on the evidence and how the agent applies that evidence (Gardiner 2018: 7). These philosophers believe the epistemic features provide us with all the information we need. However, evidentialists must grapple with the concern that if we follow the evidence to the letter of the law, we are going to be forced to accept beliefs that are immoral. Consider the following case:

(1) The Cosmos Club:

Historian John Hope Franklin hosts a party at his Washington D.C. social club, The Cosmos Club. As Franklin reports, ‘It was during our stroll through the club that a white woman called me out, presented me with her coat check, and ordered me to bring her coat. I patiently told her that if she would present her coat to a uniformed attendant, “and all of the club attendants were in uniform,” perhaps she could get her coat’. Almost every attendant at the Cosmos Club is black and few members of the club are black. This demographic distribution almost certainly led to the woman’s false belief that Franklin is an attendant. (Gardiner 2018: 5)

Evidentialists look to the available evidence and the woman's use of that evidence to determine the rationality of her belief that Franklin was an attendant at the club. In this case, evidentialists say that the belief is rational because it is well informed and in line with the race demographics at the club. The woman used the reasoning that since nearly every attendant was black and nearly every guest was white, and Franklin was black, therefore Franklin was an attendant. Since evidentialists base their value judgments about beliefs solely on the evidence, and the woman responded rationally to the evidence, the evidentialist framework says the woman's belief was rational. This case is an example of when evidentialists would conclude that an obviously offensive belief is rational simply because the agent responded appropriately to the evidence presented to her.

Advocates of moral encroachment say there is a clear intuition that the evidentialists got it wrong. Moral encroachers concede there is no epistemic failure in this case, and acknowledge the woman's belief is rational when based *exclusively* on the available evidence. But, moral encroachers believe that epistemic factors are *not* the only relevant criteria in determining the rationality of the woman's belief. The belief's rationality is also based on moral factors. Moral encroachers claim that there is a moral failure present in the woman's belief - the belief is racist. If the belief is racist, it cannot be rational. So, even though the belief is epistemically flawless it is still irrational due to the woman's flawed moral judgment.

The soundness of the moral encroacher's argument is based on the case being epistemically flawless. If we can prove there is an epistemic flaw in this case, moral encroachment becomes unmotivated. I argue that the woman's belief is epistemically flawed, and therefore moral encroachment would not be motivated by this case. This case is flawed in three

ways; 1) neglecting relevant alternatives; 2) improper generalization of a statistic; 3) inappropriate application of available evidence (Gardiner 2018: 7).

First, the RAT (relevant alternative theory) says that since we use our knowledge about the world and past experience constantly as a critical tool to interact with the world, we take ourselves to know a lot of things that we cannot actually know for certain. Therefore, the RAT argues that when forming beliefs we only need to concern ourselves with relevant alternatives (Dretske 2000: 44). For example, we see a four-legged animal with black and white stripes in the zebra exhibit at the zoo and use context clues, our knowledge about the world, and past experiences to conclude that we are looking at a zebra. Dretske points out that we cannot know for certain that the four-legged animal in the zebra exhibit is not just a carefully painted mule. In this example, he argues that even though we cannot know for certain that the black and white striped four-legged animal in the zebra exhibit is a zebra, given the context we are in (the zebra section at the zoo), our knowledge about the world (what zebras look like), and our past experience (the zebra section at the zoo always has zebras), the alternative explanation that the animal is a cleverly painted mule is not relevant and therefore we do not have to entertain it (Dretske 2000: 39). Just as it is rational to neglect irrelevant alternatives, it is also irrational to neglect relevant alternatives. In the case of the Cosmos Club, the woman did not engage with the possible (and very viable) alternative that Franklin was a guest at the club and not an attendant. There was evidence, Franklin not wearing the attendant uniform, that made the alternative salient. Therefore, she should have considered it.

The second epistemic failure we could interpret the woman making in forming her belief was a statistical generalization. Her belief was formed based on true statistics, that the vast majority of attendants at the club were black and very few guests at the club were black, so

therefore the likelihood of Franklin being an attendant was high. This shows that the accuracy of a belief is not enough to make it epistemically sound. In this case, the woman overestimated the strength of a statistic and applied it inappropriately. This is referred to as the problem of projectability, which occurs when a factual statistic is applied too broadly and in a way that makes the resulting belief inaccurate (Munton 2019: 233). Statistically generalized beliefs, Munton argues, are not always irrational to hold. However, they do highlight a common epistemic failure and serve as a reminder that we have an obligation to better recognize and communicate the epistemic harm generalizing statistics can cause.

Lastly, the evidence available seems ample: it is common knowledge that the attendants are responsible for the guest's coats at the club, every attendant was in uniform, therefore the evidence seems to make it clear that anyone not in uniform would not be responsible for taking guest's coats at the club. Since the epistemic failure cannot be attributed to lack of evidence, it must be the woman's improper or negligent application of the available evidence. She did not come to the appropriate conclusion given the evidence. Franklin was wearing something different from every attendant at the club. I argue that this alone is enough reason for the woman to take an extra moment to analyze the situation. The woman used race as the identifying factor of an attendant when the only appropriate identifying factor was uniform.

For these three reasons, the belief was epistemically flawed and therefore not a motivating case for moral encroachment. I agree that cases such as the Cosmos Club come with a nagging intuition that the woman's belief is irrational. However, moral encroachment does not successfully identify this problem because it relies on the case being epistemically flawless. Gardiner argues that in cases like the Cosmos Club, there is a clear epistemic failure that makes the belief harmful without bringing morality into question. She concludes that moral

encroachment strives for an unattainable goal, namely that people should hold impossible beliefs. When I say impossible, I mean those that are “epistemically impeccable—well supported by the evidence and conscientiously considered—yet morally wrong because racist” (Gardiner 2018: 21). Instead, she suggests placing emphasis on the understanding of the evidence available and the context behind it and identifying failures from there. However, I argue evidentialists miss something crucial in their value judgment of the case as well; their argument allows intuitively impermissible beliefs to be rational. Since neither group successfully identifies this impermissibility, I propose a third group in the debate: doxastic wronging.

Doxastic wrongs are failures to relate to others as we should. To understand what it means to relate to others, it is helpful to think about how we relate to people and objects differently. We use objects when they serve as an asset, and neglect objects when they are not helpful (Basu 2019A: 916). For example, we use a screwdriver when we need a screw to be tightened or loosened, and neglect the screwdriver when we do not need to tighten or loosen any screws. We do not epistemically owe the screwdriver anything. Obviously, we treat people much differently. We epistemically owe more to people than we do to objects. Therefore, at the very least, there is *something* that we epistemically owe to one another. Namely, to see and treat others as people and not objects. In the Cosmos Club case, the woman seems to treat Franklin as a number based on a statistical generalization that because he is black he is likely an attendant. It is clear that the woman fails to relate to Franklin as she should. This is a kind of moral failure that was not acknowledged by evidentialists or argued by moral encroachers but seems promising.

Doxastic wronging is a view about what is permissible to believe. Moral encroachment is a view about what is rational to believe. I am going to marry these views and use doxastic

wronging to motivate the idea, espoused in moral encroachment, that there are moral constraints on what is rational for us to believe. Chapter 1 will motivate doxastic wronging as Basu defines it, highlight its shortcomings, and then propose a modified interpretation of what it means to doxastically wrong. In Chapter 2, I will expand on doxastic wronging by looking at wronging by racist beliefs. In the third and final chapter, I am going to explain how doxastic wronging and my modified interpretation of it attempt to fill the lacuna that moral encroachment and evidentialism create. I will also introduce pragmatic encroachment and two modified versions of pragmatic encroachment in an effort to close the gap even further. Finally, I will explain the purpose of this thesis and leave us with several questions that were left unanswered.

Chapter 1: Doxastic Wronging

In the introduction, I laid out the debate between evidentialism and moral encroachment and I claimed that neither group successfully solves the problem we are faced with: that our epistemic principles sometimes demand that we form beliefs that are morally problematic (racist, sexist, etc.). To attempt to solve this I am introducing a third thesis, that of doxastic wronging. Doxastic wronging is when “one person wrongs another in virtue of what she believes about him” (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 181). Doxastic wronging rests on the assumption that we can be hurt by what others believe of us. At first glance, this seems relatively easy to accept. For example, imagine my best friend Emma secretly believes that I am boring and uninteresting, that I have no personality, and that I am not deserving of success or love. Suppose I never found out about this belief and Emma’s actions never reflected these feelings - she treated me exactly the way a best friend ought to. It seems reasonable to be hurt, or feel wronged by the things she believes about me regardless of the actions they do (or don’t) produce. Although this may seem convincing, the doxastic wronging thesis proves to be controversial for reasons that will be

explained in this chapter. I am introducing doxastic wrongdoing for the purpose of filling the gap between the two extremes of evidentialism and moral encroachment. The goal of this chapter is to charitably motivate doxastic wrongdoing before I offer some objections with the intention of rearticulating a stronger version of the view. In the next chapter, I will dive deeper into how doxastic wrongdoing applies to racist beliefs, and will tie doxastic wrongdoing back to the discussion of moral encroachment and evidentialism in the final chapter.

There are three important factors in the definition of doxastic wrongdoing: (1) the belief must be directed; (2) the wrong must be committed by a belief; (3) the wrong must be in virtue of what is believed (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 181-182). The case of my best friend Emma believing horrible things about me satisfies all three parts of this definition. First, her belief is directed at me; rather than an undirected belief such as ‘people are boring and uninteresting’, it is a directed belief that ‘my best friend Sophie is boring and uninteresting’. Second, the wrong committed in this case is committed by the belief itself. Even if she never acted on her beliefs (by treating me poorly, gossiping with others about how much she dislikes me, etc.), I am still wronged by Emma believing that I am boring and uninteresting. Third, Emma wrongs me in virtue of what is believed - the effects the beliefs have on me (such as crushing my confidence, spiking insecurities, isolating myself from others) are not how Emma has wronged me, rather Emma’s belief that I am boring and uninteresting is what wronged me.

Here is why this is controversial: it makes a lot of sense to say that a belief can harm because of its actions. For example, if Emma were to gossip with another friend of mine about how boring I am, there is a clear wrong done. Or, if Emma yawned and rolled her eyes every time we got into a conversation, there is a clear wrong done. However, doxastic wrongdoing is *not* successfully motivated by situations like these. Doxastic wrongdoing says that even if Emma never

gossiped with a friend about how boring I am, yawned and rolled her eyes when I spoke, or acted on her belief in *any* other way she would still be wronging me *in virtue of* her belief alone.

To better understand this thesis, it would be helpful to discuss what it means to wrong someone. In this paper, we are interested in cases when someone is owed something they are not given and are wronged on that basis. There is no one definition of ‘wrong’ or ‘wronging’ used by everyone in the philosophical community. However, here are three existing accounts of what wronging means in terms of action as well as an addition of my own that I recommend we use in tandem to create a broad and charitable definition of wronging. John Gardner provides a broad definition that claims someone has been wronged when there has been “a breach of duty, whether or not it is unjustified” (Gardner 2005: 100). Michael Thompson claims that wronging someone can occur in three ways (1) you wrong someone if you do something that you do not have the right to do, (2) you wrong someone if you do something that you have a duty *not* to do, or (3) a wrong occurs when someone else has a right to not have done to them which you in fact do. For example, a random person, let’s call him Michael (1) does not have the right to kill me, (2) he has a duty to *not* kill me, and (3) I have a right to not be killed by Michael. If my rights are violated or Michael does not fulfill his duties, a wrong has been committed (Thompson 2004: 334). Paul Faulkner provides a third view which claims wronging occurs when we do things that are not in accordance with our moral obligations (Faulkner 2007: 535). So, Michael has a moral obligation not to kill me and if he did not act in accordance with that obligation, he would be wronging me.

However, I argue these accounts of what it means to wrong through action are missing something. So, I propose a definition of my own to add to our understanding of wronging. We wrong someone when we violate the expectations they reasonably hold of us. When I say ‘reasonable expectation’, I am referring to the assumption that we will follow through on the

basic duties and obligations we have in treating others. For example, I hold the (very) reasonable expectation that Michael ought to not steal from me. If Michael stole my purse hanging on the back of my chair at a restaurant, he clearly violated that expectation and therefore wronged me. Expectations are unreasonable however, when they are in excess of those duties and obligations we have in treating others, or if it is an expectation that is unachievable or unattainable. For example, parents holding the expectation that their child will become the President of the United States is unreasonable. Although it may not be unattainable, it is both incredibly unlikely and in excess of the basic expectation we ought to have for children (such as working hard, being honest and kind, etc.). Reasonable expectations that we hold for one another through action are widely accepted, and enforced by law; we hold the reasonable expectations that people may not hurt others physically, steal from others, cheat at the expense of others, and so on. Violations of these reasonable expectations are clear, and therefore wronging through action is very often identifiable and punishable.

The accounts presented here are important for our understanding of what it means to wrong someone by action, but they must be modified when discussing what it means to wrong someone by belief. The reason for modification is that in order to doxastically wrong, the wrong has to be done solely by virtue of a belief and not by any associated action. Based on our collection of definitions from other philosophers for what it means to wrong someone through action, I suggest we may doxastically wrong (or wrong by belief) in three ways (1) you doxastically wrong someone if you *believe* something that you ought not to *believe* about them; (2) you doxastically wrong someone if you have a duty not to *believe* something that you do *believe* about them; (3) you doxastically wrong someone if they have a right to not have you hold certain *beliefs* about them and they have that right violated.

As this modified definition highlights, in order to doxastically wrong somebody, we must hold directed beliefs that wrong regardless of the action associated or the effect the belief has. Therefore, in order for doxastic wronging to be motivated, we must be able to identify a case where someone wrongs under these conditions, by virtue of their belief alone. In the remainder of this chapter, I am going to present two cases: (1) The Racist Hermit and (2) Grace and Frankie. Through understanding these cases, I will add a fourth definition of what it means to doxastically wrong and I will argue that the first case is not a convincing example of doxastic wronging, and though the second one gets closer, I submit it is still unconvincing. I intend to show through these cases the definition of doxastic wronging as presented by Basu must be modified in order to sufficiently categorize this type of wrongdoing. To do this, we turn to the first case:

(1) The Racist Hermit:

Suppose a racist hermit in the woods discovers trash containing an alumni newsletter from Sanjeev's university, which includes Sanjeev's photo. The hermit immediately concludes that the pictured person—Sanjeev—smells of curry.

Suppose also that Sanjeev happens to have recently made curry, so in this instance the hermit's belief is true—Sanjeev does smell of curry. Has the hermit wronged Sanjeev? (Basu 2019A: 919).

Basu argues that the hermit has doxastically wronged Sanjeev; the harm done to Sanjeev here is an example of relational harm. Basu argues that relational harm is when people do not follow through with their obligation to relate to others as people rather than as objects. At the most basic level, to relate to others as people and not objects is to recognize that they have emotions and feelings just like you. And, like you, they have the capacity to be wronged. In this case, the hermit has a basic obligation to Sanjeev to relate to him in this way, and by holding this

belief he fails to do so (Basu 2019A: 920). There are three important pieces of this case I will break down. First, the hermit's belief was true – Sanjeev does smell of curry. Second, the hermit lives in isolation from others. Third, Sanjeev and the hermit will never meet. In fact, Sanjeev will never even know the hermit exists and therefore will never become aware of the hermit's belief.

In response to the first aspect of the case, that the hermit's belief was true (Sanjeev did smell of curry), Basu says that even though the hermit was correct, his belief still wronged Sanjeev. Even if his belief that Sanjeev smelled like curry is true, the hermit cannot make the inference from information learned in the alumni article to his conclusion that Sanjeev smells of curry. This could have been Sanjeev's first time ever making curry, so if the hermit had formed this belief on any day leading up to this one, he would have been incorrect. His correctness was accidental, and therefore the truth value of the belief is not relevant in the belief's capacity to wrong (Basu 2019A: 920).

Next, the hermit lives in isolation from others. The hermit is assumed to have once been a willing member of society, so he is "a product of the institutional structures that support racism" (Basu 2019A: 919). But, he no longer contributes to those structures due to his isolation. Basu argues that even though he is no longer a willing, functioning member of society, he still has wronged Sanjeev. Basu says that we have an obligation from person to person. This obligation transcends lifestyle and degree of isolation. Simply being a person is relation enough to owe *something* to each other, and to hold the power to wrong others through beliefs.

Finally, Basu argues that even though Sanjeev and the hermit do not know one another, will never meet, and Sanjeev will never become aware that the hermit holds this belief, the hermit has still wronged Sanjeev. Awareness of the belief is not necessary to do harm. If it was intuitively true that actions/words/beliefs could wrong someone only if they knew about them, consider this: Sanjeev's partner cheats on Sanjeev, but he will never know. It seems clear that the

action is equally objectionable whether or not Sanjeev finds out, but does the action equally wrong Sanjeev regardless of if he finds out? Regardless of if Sanjeev's partner *equally* wrongs Sanjeev whether or not he finds out, he has still been wronged to some extent. Therefore, it is possible to wrong someone even if they have no knowledge of the wronging. For this reason, Basu argues that Sanjeev was wronged by the hermit (Basu 2019A: 919).

My response to Basu's argument from this case is this: I argue the hermit *did not* wrong Sanjeev through his belief. I agree with Basu that the truth of a belief is inconsequential in the wrongness of that belief, a belief could end up being correct or incorrect simply by chance. However, I disagree with Basu and claim that the other two pieces of this case — that the hermit lives in isolation from others and the hermit and Sanjeev are complete strangers who will never meet — offer reason to think that the hermit did *not* wrong Sanjeev.

First, I do see relational harm in failing to relate to others as we ought. However, I claim that there are varying degrees to what we owe to others in virtue of our relationship with them. Basu argues that our relation to one another as simply being human beings is enough to doxastically wrong, and I disagree. I argue that this is far too demanding. I owe more to my family, friends, and others that I have an intimate relationship with than I do to strangers or acquaintances. It is very difficult to doxastically wrong strangers and acquaintances, whereas it is easier to doxastically wrong family, friends, or those that I have an intimate relationship with. Because Sanjeev and the hermit are complete strangers that will never meet, and Sanjeev does not even know of the hermit's existence, the hermit cannot wrong Sanjeev by virtue of what he believes about him.

Additionally, since the hermit lives in isolation from others, I claim that he owes less to others than those who are functioning members of society. When someone forfeits the benefits of participating in society (government benefits, human interaction, etc.), I argue that they also

forfeit the obligation to owe others more than the most basic things such as not wronging another person through action. The hermit regardless of isolation is capable of wronging through action. However, since he *does not stand* in any relation to others, he is limited in his capacity to wrong. Therefore, due to his isolation and his willing absence from society, he is incapable of doxastic wronging. For these reasons, The Racist Hermit case is insufficient in motivating doxastic wronging.

It seems clear that there is a relational element missing in the Racist Hermit case. In light of this, let's look at a case where the wrong done is more intuitive as the wrong is caused by one family member to another and by a person who is a functioning member of society. This case is a scene from the hit Netflix series, *Grace and Frankie*.

(2) Grace and Frankie:

During an interview, Grace reveals some beliefs she holds about her daughters, Brianna and Mallory. She believes Brianna has run the family company into the ground; she also believes neither that Mallory is the smart daughter nor that she has made good use of her degree (that Grace paid for). Later, as her daughters pack up their desks, Grace is confused by why her daughters are upset with her but is willing to apologize for having said what she did. As Mallory naturally points out, 'It's not that you said all those terrible things, it's that you actually believed them' (Basu 2021: 107-8).

Basu argues that this is an example of doxastic wronging, as it satisfies all three criteria mentioned at the start of this chapter. First, the belief is directed specifically by Grace to her daughters. Second -- as Mallory mentioned -- the wrong occurred by virtue of the belief itself and not by the action of Grace communicating her belief in the interview. Third, the effect of Grace's belief (her daughters finding out and feeling offended) is not where the wrong was done

but instead in the formation of the belief itself. It seems clear that in this case Mallory and Brianna were wronged by their mother's *belief* about them. Since the wrong done was through the belief, Grace's apology did not properly address what she had done - instead of apologizing for saying what she said, she must instead apologize for believing what she believed.

Here is what is distinct about this case in comparison to the Racist Hermit case. First, Grace's belief is false: Briana has proven to be a successful business owner that has simply taken a different approach than Grace did when she ran the business, and factors out of her control have caused the business to suffer. Mallory is a single mother of four who works hard for her children and has made the best use of her degree possible given unforeseen circumstances. Second, Grace does not live in isolation from others - she is a fully functioning member of society. Third, not only has Grace *met* Mallory and Briana, she arguably has one of the most intimate relationships people can have: mother and daughter.

The first piece of this case is that her belief is false. Given the context in the show, Briana is not running the family company into the ground and Mallory is a hard-working single mother dealt a difficult hand, and by the account of most people is a smart and dedicated woman. However, as said before, the truth value of a belief is irrelevant in its capacity to doxastically wrong. This puts the weight on the remaining two elements of the case to determine where a doxastic wrong occurred. However, given Basu's argument, even if the belief was true and Briana and Mallory were not smart or successful, this case would still illustrate a doxastic wrong. This is because the truth value of a case is irrelevant in the capacity to doxastically wrong others.

The second distinction between the Grace and Frankie and the Racist Hermit cases is that, unlike the hermit, Grace is a participating member of society. This alone means that she

owes more to society than the hermit does. She, of course, has the capacity to wrong through action. And, by virtue of participating in society and reaping the benefits of all society has to offer, owes more to her fellow citizens than the hermit does.

Finally, it seems intuitive that Grace does *more* wrong than the Racist Hermit. What I think is different about these two cases is that Grace has a very intimate relationship with the people she is believing badly of, namely that of mother and daughter. In the Racist Hermit case, Basu argues that simply being humans is enough to owe something to one another in terms of what we believe about them. I have suggested that is far too demanding. In light of this, I propose we add a fourth idea of what happens when we doxastically wrong someone. My addition to what it means to wrong someone through *action* was violating the reasonable expectations we hold of one another through how we act towards one another. When modified for our broad definition of what it means to wrong someone by *belief*, I argue that it is to violate the reasonable expectations we hold of one another in terms of what we believe. Since Grace is Mallory and Briana's mother, they hold the reasonable expectation that she believes they are not unintelligent and unsuccessful people. In believing that they are in fact unintelligent and unsuccessful, Grace violates that expectation and has therefore wronged them. Therefore, to doxastically wrong someone is to believe something about them that you ought not to given the relationship you have to that person.

Since Grace is the mother of Mallory and Briana, she has the capacity to doxastically wrong them. She has a duty to believe the best in those that she has an intimate relationship with. However, this case is still missing something. Grace's belief may have wronged Mallory and Briana, but her belief was not racist/sexist/homophobic etc. It is important to recognize that in cases that involve racist/sexist/homophobic beliefs, the capacity to doxastically wrong is greater.

The second chapter will be devoted to wronging through racist beliefs, and examine how that addition changes our conception of doxastic wronging. However, for the time being, and from what we have learned from the Racist Hermit and Grace and Frankie cases, I propose a more limited interpretation of doxastic wronging than Basu. My interpretation states that in order for someone to wrong another by virtue of what they believe, they must (1) be a participating member of society; (2) hold a belief that is directed at a family member, friend, or someone that they have an intimate relationship with; (3) harm that person not by the actions that follow but rather by the belief itself.

Before we move on to this next goal, it will be helpful here to see if my account does a better job of dealing with certain objections that Basu's account of doxastic wronging faces. The two objections to Basu's account that she recognizes are: (1) the problem of control and (2) the problem of coordination:

First, the problem of control explains that we do not have enough control over our beliefs to be blamed for them, and therefore to be responsible for wronging others based on them. People who argue for the problem of control think about beliefs in the same way we think about tornados: a tornado can do a lot of damage, hurt a lot of people and things. However, the tornado had no conscious control over its path or strength. It would be illogical to say that the tornado that tore down your home wronged you - of course, it is devastating, but the tornado did not wrong you. To philosophers that argue for the problem of control, beliefs are the same thing as tornados: people may harm others based on what they believe about them but they cannot wrong those people nor do they owe those people an apology because they did not have sufficient control over the beliefs they formed. This argument claims that telling someone what they ought to believe is the same thing as telling a tornado it ought to take a specific route to avoid your

house; yes, it would be nice for the tornado not to hit your house, or for people not to believe harmful things but that does not mean the outcome is changeable. (Basu and Schroeder: 186-8)

In response to this objection, I argue that whether or not we have control over our beliefs is more complicated than a simple yes or no. I agree with Basu in that we must look at the roots of our beliefs, where they originated. To understand where our beliefs come from we must look at things such as the racist/sexist/homophobic institutions that have been so well integrated into our lives that their influence may not be obvious. We must look at our own experiences that have taught us to see the world in one way and challenge ourselves to question why that is; maybe our parents, even unintentionally, planted problematic seeds that grew into problematic roots which we still use to shape our understanding of the world. Maybe we are sheltered from gaining a greater understanding of other people's perspectives, which makes our worldview that we use to form beliefs too narrow-minded. I claim that without this kind of reflection we do not have control over our beliefs. But, if we take the time to question the roots we have the potential to control future beliefs.

The second objection to Basu's definition of doxastic wrongdoing is the problem of coordination. The problem of coordination takes a similar approach to evidentialists (those who argue that the only factor in the permissibility of a belief is the evidence). Proponents of this objection hold that if a belief responds appropriately to the evidence, or is epistemically sound, we should be justified in holding it. That is not to say epistemically flawless beliefs can never do harm, epistemically flawless beliefs have the potential to cause significant harm. However, the problem of coordination argues that we do not owe people apologies for holding epistemically flawless beliefs about them, even if they hurt (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 196-7).

My response to this objection is that if a belief does moral harm we will be able to find the cause of that harm in the epistemic features of the belief. For example, in looking at the roots of Grace's belief that her daughters were unsuccessful and making poor use of their education, we can point to epistemic features that led Grace to develop this belief: the problematic values she was taught growing up in a very different social climate, the hardships that she went through to start a successful business of her own, and her life experiences that have shaped her worldview. By challenging those roots, Grace could very well have the capacity to form a different belief about her daughters. I argue that if a belief does harm to someone, the root will be epistemic.

In Chapter 2, I will claim that although we do not have direct control over our beliefs, we do have indirect control. This indirect control is due to the ability we have to recognize the epistemic features that bear on our belief formation. My revised interpretation of Basu's definition (that for someone to doxastically wrong, they must (1) be a participating member of society; (2) hold a belief that is directed at a family member, friend, or someone they have an intimate relationship with; (3) harm that person not by the actions that follow but rather by the belief itself) will be further amended through our discussion in Chapter 2.

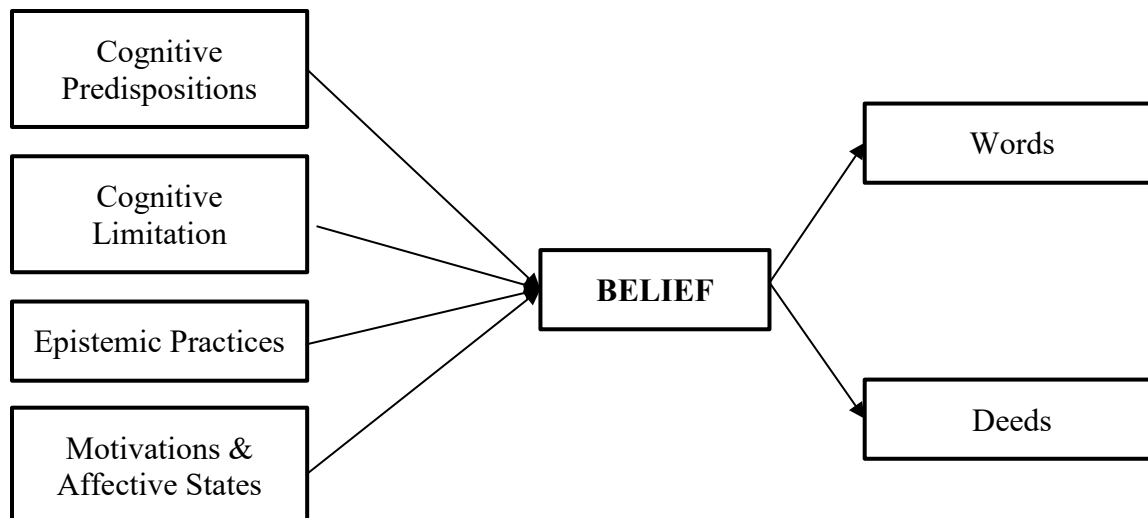
Chapter 2: Doxastic Wronging by Racist Beliefs

In Chapter 1, I identified a potential solution to fill the gap between evidentialism and moral encroachment: doxastic wrongdoing. To recap, doxastic wrongdoing involves wronging someone by what you believe about them. Rima Basu's definition of doxastic wrongdoing states that for someone to doxastically wrong another, three criteria have to be met: (1) the belief must be directed; (2) the wrong must be committed by a belief; (3) the wrong must be in virtue of

what is believed (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 181-2). After analyzing the Racist Hermit and Grace and Frankie cases, I proposed a modified interpretation of Basu's conception of doxastic wrongdoing. This modified version claims that in order to doxastically wrong somebody the agent must (1) be a participating member of society; (2) hold a belief that is directed at a family member, friend, or someone that they have an intimate relationship with; (3) harm that person not by the actions that lead up to or follow belief formation but rather by the belief itself. We also established in the last chapter that we do owe certain things to each other in virtue of being in a society. Whether we owe others kind beliefs is controversial, and I argue that we only owe good beliefs to some people, some of the time. However, since this duty does exist in at least some cases, one of the things that make its operations and applications difficult is structural racism. The goal of the first half of this chapter is to explain the flaws in our belief-forming process and motivate our modified interpretation of doxastic wrongdoing through a case where the agent holds a racist belief. In the second half of the chapter, I am going to look at some problems that arise even for my view.

Section I:

Before the cases are introduced, it is important to understand Rima Basu's conception of the causes and effects of beliefs. Basu argues that there are several factors that influence our belief formation and two ways our beliefs are expressed. To see this more clearly, I have reproduced a diagram from Basu's paper "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs" (Basu 2019B: 2507):



We will call the four elements on the left side of the diagram our epistemic system. Let's think of the epistemic system as the governing system for our beliefs (Toole 2021: 79). Putting it in terms of real governments, the form of government we have determines many things such as what role each person in a society plays, whose vote gets to count, and what the rules of law are. In the same respect, our epistemic system determines which beliefs are permissible and they provide a set of schemas for understanding how we approach the world. Unfortunately, it is inevitable that our epistemic system will have *some* false information in it because it is impossible to survive without stereotypes. For example, the stereotype that a certain color and shape of berry is poisonous is necessary to keep us from eating poisonous berries. Basu claims that the four components of our epistemic system are (1) cognitive predispositions, (2) cognitive limitation, (3) epistemic practices, and (4) motivations & affective states. I will explain each of these and show how they impact our belief formation process.

(1) Cognitive predispositions are a tendency to interpret evidence in a certain way. For example, imagine a woman who has been subjected to sexual harassment and a man who has not been subjected to sexual harassment and does not even understand the issue with the concept.

They see their boss at work touching one of his female subordinates inappropriately. The woman is cognitively predisposed to see the problem with this situation, interpreting the evidence she is presented with and concluding that her boss is sexually harassing a co-worker. On the other hand, the man might be cognitively predisposed to see nothing wrong with the situation as his interpretation of the evidence leads him to form the belief that all that is happening is harmless flirting. Our cognitive predispositions impact our belief formation as our experiences and social location (race, gender, sexuality etc.) lead us to form different beliefs when presented with the exact same evidence.

(2) Cognitive Limitations are the deficiencies in our ability to accurately and effectively understand the world around us. For example, I am only able to speak English and therefore am cognitively limited to understanding the world around me through English and not any other language. This creates large gaps in my abilities to understand many situations and cultures globally and will have an impact on my belief formation.

(3) Epistemic practices are the recognized conceptual resources that we have. In other words, they are the language that we have for attending to our world, the habits of attention that we develop given the resources we have, and the inferences that we think are licensed. For example, imagine my tube of Chapstick rolls off the table. Briana Toole gives several explanations for this such as “there may have been a tiny earthquake; the air conditioner may have just cut on; my apartment may have a ghost; or perhaps my chubby cat's squishy tail disturbed the air in just the right way” (Toole 2021: 81). Given that our epistemic practices exclude things like ghosts, I am not licensed to hold the explanation that my apartment may have a ghost. Our epistemic practices confine the scope of our belief formation to only things that we are licensed to believe.

(4) Motivational and Affective States are our feelings and motivations that cause us to do things. For example, we are subject to things like confirmation and disconfirmation bias. Confirmation bias means that someone has a belief, for example, that black people are criminals, and they actively find evidence that confirms this belief. This could be by cherry picking their evidence, getting their information from biased sources (like Facebook groups or conservative leaning news stations), or surrounding themselves with people who believe the same things that they do and create an echo chamber. Disconfirmation bias occurs when someone has a belief, for example, that black people are criminals, and even when they are presented with evidence that directly disconfirms that belief, they dismiss that evidence. With disconfirmation bias, no amount of contrary evidence will change their belief. These are two kinds of biases that are inside of our cognitive system and influence our belief formation process.

These four factors combined are our epistemic system, and our epistemic system is what creates the background with which we form our beliefs. The point of this diagram is to show that many things such as our values, our conceptual resources, and the hypothesis that we are willing to entertain shape the beliefs that we end up forming. However, I suggest that this diagram as Basu presents it is incomplete, because our epistemic system must be shaped by something else. I argue that something else is structural and institutional injustice. To see why this addition is important, let's turn to a case featured in a New York Times article about gentrification in Brooklyn, NY:

(1) Stranger in Your Own Home:

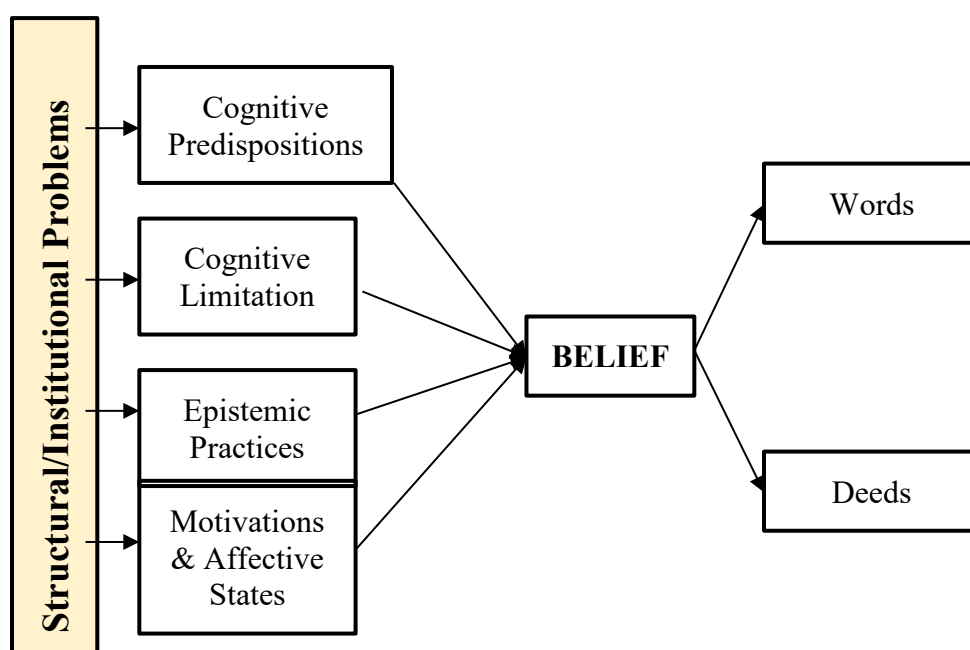
Thomas Holley is a longtime Brooklyn, NY homeowner, who has lived in his Crown Heights brownstone that he has owned for 58 years. Holley, who is black, lives in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. As such, it is increasingly the case

that his neighbors are white. He experienced the problematic shift in his community first hand, telling a reporter “I noticed a neighbor putting up something out front and I was curious. I went over to strike a conversation and before I could finish a sentence, he told me that he didn’t have any money” (Kerubo 2021).

Thomas’ neighbor formed the racist belief that a black man in his neighborhood was not his neighbor but in fact someone asking for money. This belief reflects the sentiment that these new homeowners in Crown Heights already think of the area as their own rather than a neighborhood they are infiltrating at the expense of people like Thomas. This case seems to be a clear example of my modified version of doxastic wronging, as it fits each of the three criteria proposed. First, both Thomas and his neighbor are participating members of society. Second, the neighbor’s belief is directed at Thomas, someone that although he may not know personally, he has an intimate relationship with *by virtue of being neighbors*. Third, the neighbor wrongs Thomas not by telling him that he has no money to give but rather by the belief itself, that Thomas is not a resident of the neighborhood.

Additionally, the neighbor’s epistemic system (each of the four causes of beliefs that Basu outlines in her diagram) likely has an effect on his belief formation. First, the neighbor may be cognitively predisposed given his identity as a white man and his life experiences to use the evidence available to him to form the belief that he did. Second, his cognitive limitations may have prevented him from seeing possible relevant alternatives, such as Thomas was in fact a resident in the community. Third, his epistemic practices licensed him to form the belief that Thomas did not live in the community based on his race. Fourth, his motivational and affective states played a role in his belief formation as he acted on his feelings about black people in the

community. Even though it is clear how his epistemic system influenced his belief formation process, it seems as though there is a deeper underlying factor that causes each of these causes. I suggest that is the structural/institutional problems that come with living in a society and shape our worldview from a young age. This deeper-rooted institutional element affects everyone. The systems in place perpetuate unjust racial discrimination and effect each part of our epistemic system. This is why I propose a modified version of Basu's diagram including the structural/institutional problems:



The point of this modified diagram is to illustrate and motivate the idea that all of our cognitive and epistemic features are influenced by structural and institutional racism. I claim that (1) given the truth of structural racism and (2) given the impact of structural racism on the belief forming process, (3) racist beliefs will *always* be a result of a flaw in these structures. Returning back to the introduction of this paper, proponents of moral encroachment claim that we can form epistemically flawless beliefs that are still morally problematic. I argue in response that structural and institutional problems always have an effect on our epistemic system such that when we arrive at racist beliefs they are *always epistemically flawed*. This means that racist beliefs can

always be traced back to an epistemic flaw in our belief forming system. Of course, these racist beliefs are not only epistemically flawed but also morally problematic.

Section II:

As mentioned at the end of Chapter 1, Basu's account of doxastic wrongdoing faces two large objections: the problem of control and the problem of coordination. The problem of control says that beliefs are like tornados: although they may do damage they are uncontrollable and therefore we are unable to be blamed for them regardless of the wrong they may cause (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 186-8). The problem of coordination says that if a belief responds appropriately to the evidence, or is epistemically sound, we should be justified in holding it (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 196-7).

Let's apply these two problems to my modified diagram of belief formation. In response to the problem of control, although our beliefs may be formed automatically or subconsciously, they are formed by our epistemic system and the structural and institutional racism that influences it. So, although we may not have direct control over our beliefs, we have indirect control which can be achieved by examining those roots. By actively rejecting and unlearning racist roots, we can change the amount of negative influence the structural and institutional racism has on our belief formation process. This will in turn make the subconscious and uncontrollable formation of our beliefs less prone to doxastic wrongdoing. In response to the problem of coordination, I tried to show in the first section that every racist belief is epistemically flawed and therefore no racist belief is justified.

In the Stranger in Your Own Home case, the neighbor doxastically wrongs Thomas because of what he believes in virtue of his relationship. And contrary to moral encroachment, we can account for the wrongness of the belief by looking at flaws in the epistemic system, made

possible by structural and institutional racism. Because of this, we want to be able to say at this point that when a person forms a racially discriminatory belief, it constitutes a doxastic wrong and it is in fact epistemically flawed. However, there are cases I will propose that might lead us to reject this proposal; cases where, if this model is applied, we would not agree with the conclusion.

As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, stereotypes are useful sometimes, such as when we are trying to figure out which berries are poisonous and which are safe to eat. They represent cognitive shortcuts which are absolutely necessary in order to form beliefs about the world. However, I am interested in looking at whether or not our intuition changes when these stereotypes are racially motivated. Consider these two cases, from which I anticipate very different reactions:

(1) Cherry Street:

A black boy, age 15, is walking home from school down Cherry Street. A white male cop driving a marked cop car drives down the street. They do not make eye contact and the cop does not slow down, say anything to the boy, or take any action towards him whatsoever. However, the boy forms the belief that the cop is racist and sees him as a criminal. Has the boy doxastically wronged the cop?

(2) Elevator:

A black man walks into an elevator. There is one white woman inside the elevator who entered a few floors higher than the man, and the two will now share the elevator for the trip down to the lobby. When the elevator doors opened and the woman saw the man about to enter, she formed the belief that the man was dangerous and in response, she clutched her purse, her heart rate sped up, and she

took a step further to one side - in an effort to maximize the space between them.

Has the woman doxastically wronged the man?

I claim that there is an intuition that the belief formed in the Cherry Street case is permissible but the belief formed in the Elevator case is impermissible. In the Cherry Street case, given the extensive history of police brutality, this boy is able to protect himself better by being aware that there is a white cop passing him, and that white cop might be racist. Therefore, it is justifiable for the boy to hold the belief that the white cop is racist and may harm him. However, I expect us to have a very different intuition when thinking about the Elevator case. Even though this white woman may be claiming to be protecting herself as well, she has done something morally wrong. Let's try to understand what explains the asymmetry in these reactions.

When the white lady forms the belief that the black man in the elevator is a criminal, this belief is a direct result of anti-black systemic racism. She deploys the engrained stereotype that black men are criminals and forms her belief accordingly. However, when the black boy forms the belief that the white cop is racist and dangerous, this belief is *not* a result of systemic racism. This is because there is no structural racism against white people. Instead, the black boy believes that the white cop is racist and dangerous *because of* anti-black systemic racism. In other words, the boy is forming his belief based on an extensive and well-known history of police brutality against black people.

The white woman and black boy rely on different things in their belief formation. The evidence that the white woman relies on in her belief formation here is a direct result of structural racism. The evidence that the black boy is relying on in his belief formation here is not a result of structural racism, but instead he is behaving a certain way that is *in response to* the

reality of structural racism. *The white woman's belief is a result of structural racism, whereas the black boy's belief is a reaction to behavior influenced by structural racism.*

The Cherry Street Case fits the requirements of what constitutes a doxastic wrong. However, even if we are willing to say that the black boy doxastically wrongs the white cop, for the reasons discussed, I claim that this doxastic wrong is permissible. On the other hand, the Elevator Case satisfies the requirements of what constitutes a doxastic wrong and, for the reasons discussed, is impermissible.

These two cases highlight a complex element of doxastic wrongdoing that has not been able to be drawn out in the paper until now: that we can wrong others based on what we believe about them in permissible and impermissible ways when racism is involved. In the final chapter, I will tie our discussion of doxastic wrongdoing back to the debate explained in the introduction between evidentialism and moral encroachment. I will also introduce the concept of pragmatic encroachment, the claim that with higher stakes, greater evidence is necessary. Pragmatic encroachment will be relevant to tying together the discussion of racist beliefs in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Pragmatic Encroachment and Concluding Remarks

In this final chapter I am going to first explain the concept of pragmatic encroachment and propose two modified versions of pragmatic encroachment to help illustrate the idea that the relationship between a belief's stakes and the evidence required is complex and context is crucial. Then, I will conclude the chapter by explaining that the intention of this thesis is not to encourage the policing of others beliefs, simply to encourage critical examination of our own. Before I dive in, here is a brief reminder of what we have covered thus far:

In the introduction, I outlined the debate between evidentialism and moral encroachment. Evidentialists argue that what is rational to believe is based *only* on the evidence provided and how the agent applies that evidence. Advocates of moral encroachment, on the other hand, claim that evidence is *not* the only measure of whether or not a belief is rational. They argue that we must factor in morality when determining whether or not the beliefs we hold are justified. Neither of these groups seemed to get it right to me. It is clear that even when people respond appropriately to the evidence provided to them they can still wrong others by virtue of their beliefs. And, for moral encroachment to be plausible, there would need to be a belief that was epistemically flawless and morally wrong, something that I claim is impossible. Since neither group successfully explains the problem we are faced with, I proposed a third group to fill the gap: doxastic wronging.

Doxastic wronging is the claim that we can wrong others based on what we believe about them, even if that belief never turns into action. Rima Basu provided three necessary criteria for a doxastic wrong to occur: (1) the belief must be directed; (2) the wrong must be committed by a belief; (3) the wrong must be in virtue of what is believed (Basu and Schroeder 2018: 181-2). After analyzing the Racist Hermit case and the Grace and Frankie case, I suggested a modified set of criteria that says in order for someone to wrong another by virtue of what they believe, they must (1) be a participating member of society; (2) hold a belief that is directed at a family member, friend, or someone that they have an intimate relationship with; (3) harm that person not by the actions that follow but rather by the belief itself. This appeared to be a convincing modification until the second section of Chapter 2 when I provided the Cherry Street and Elevator cases to illustrate how racism can affect the permissibility and rationality of our beliefs.

In Chapter 2, I attempted to show that racist beliefs can *never* be epistemically flawless because even if the agent responded perfectly to an ample amount of evidence, there is unavoidable systemic and institutional racism that has shaped our epistemic systems and consequently belief formation process throughout our lives. So, although there is a clear moral failure in racist beliefs, we do not even have to reach the moral questions to determine if the belief has the power to wrong - we can identify the wrong solely through the epistemic. This argument, if effective, invalidates both evidentialism and moral encroachment. It invalidates evidentialism because no matter how well we respond to the evidence, we will never be able to form epistemically flawless beliefs. It invalidates moral encroachment because it shows that reaching the moral questions is unnecessary in identifying a wrong. To make the view that racist beliefs are *always* epistemically flawed incredibly clear, let's turn another from Basu:

(1) The Supposedly Rational Racist:

You shouldn't have done it. But you did. You scrolled down to the comments section of an article concerning the state of race relations in America, and you are now reading the comments. The comments on such articles tend to be predictable, but there is one comment that catches your eye. Amongst the slurs, the get-rich-quick schemes, and the threats of physical violence, there is the following comment: "Although it might be 'unpopular' or 'politically incorrect' to say this, I'm tired of constantly being called a racist whenever I believe of a black diner in my section that they will tip worse than the white diners in my section." The user posting the comment, Spencer, argues that the facts don't lie, and he helpfully reproduces those facts. For example, he links to studies that show that on average black diners tip substantially less than white diners. The facts, he insists, aren't

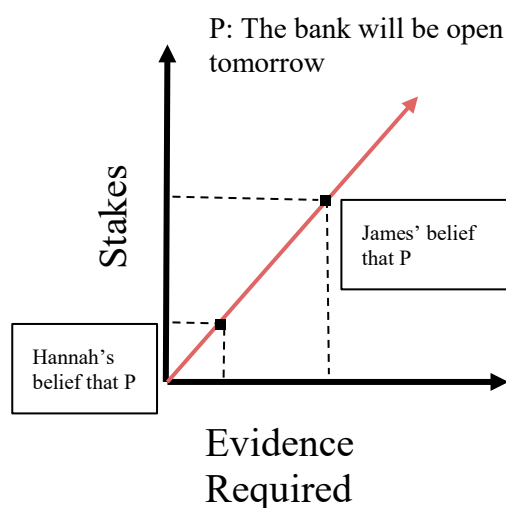
racist. If you were to deny his claims and were to believe otherwise, it would be you who is engaging in wishful thinking. It would be you who believes against the evidence. It would be you, not Spencer, who is epistemically irrational (Basu 2019B: 2498).

Basu makes the argument that Spencer's belief was epistemically flawless but still morally wrong. I claim instead that Spencer's belief was epistemically flawed *and* morally wrong. These 'studies' that Spencer shared may have concluded that black people on average tip less than white people. However, it is incredibly unlikely that these studies factored in other relevant -- and potentially statistically significant -- metrics such as the quality of the service that black people receive compared to white people. Spencer may insist the facts are not racist, and I disagree. For Spencer to form the belief that the black diners in his section were going to tip less than the white diners several things must occur first: (1) his resources must be vetted extensively (2) he would need to reflect in-depth on how his epistemic system and systemic and institutional racism more broadly has affected his belief formation process. Even after all of this, it seems as though his belief could likely *still* be epistemically flawed due to the subconscious biases too ingrained to unlearn.

This case highlights an important concept: when the stakes are higher, we must have much more evidence (sometimes I claim that we can never have enough evidence) for that belief to be justifiable. Arguably, cases where no amount of evidence would make the belief justifiable could be seen as motivating a version of moral encroachment. However, for the time being let's call this stakes/evidence relationship pragmatic encroachment. Advocates of pragmatic encroachment focus "on the practical costs associated with being wrong" (Toole 2020: 3).

Toole provides ‘Bank Cases’ to illustrate pragmatic encroachment. She provides a high stakes scenario and a low stakes scenario. In the low stakes scenario, Hannah has a check to deposit, but she is not in a rush to do it because she has no immediate bills to pay. The lines are long on Friday afternoon so instead of waiting she plans to go back the Saturday morning to deposit the check, because she knows that two weeks prior they were open at that time. In the high stakes scenario, James has a check to deposit but he is in a rush to do it because he has immediate bills to pay within the next day. The lines are long on Friday afternoon and he knows that two weeks ago the bank was open Saturday morning, but given the possibility that the bank changed their weekend hours, he becomes less confident that it will be open Saturday morning. Hannah and James have the same evidence, but since the stakes are higher for James, he needs more evidence to come to the same decision (Toole 2020: 6).

To illustrate this, let proposition P be ‘the bank will be open tomorrow’. Hannah and James have different practical costs associated with being wrong, and therefore need different evidence required to believe P. Here is a graph explaining this relationship:



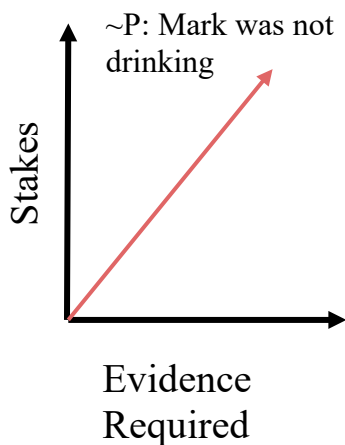
As you can see, there is a clear correlation between the costs of being wrong (the stakes), and the amount of evidence required. Now, let's apply this model to The Supposedly Rational Racist case, where the stakes are very high; Spencer is forming a belief that labels all of the black diners in his section as people that are going to tip less than the white diners. This belief, in order to be justified, would require *a lot* of evidence. It seems to me that in this case the stakes are so high that no amount of evidence would be sufficient in holding it. Pragmatic encroachment provides a framework in thinking about the costs of our beliefs and also exhibits an interesting way of looking at how beliefs can wrong. However, I claim that there are some cases that have an inverse relationship between stakes and evidence. To see what I mean, take this case:

(2) Wounded by Belief:

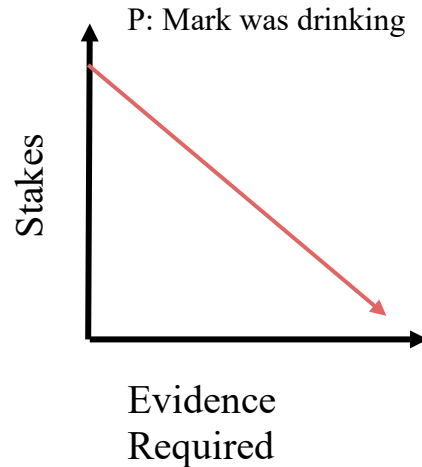
Suppose that Mark has an alcohol problem and has been sober for eight months. Tonight there's a departmental colloquium for a visiting speaker, and throughout the reception, he withstands the temptation to have a drink. But, when he gets home his partner, Maria, smells the wine that the speaker spilled on his sleeve, and Mark can tell from the way Maria looks at him that she thinks he's fallen off the wagon. Although the evidence suggests that Mark has fallen off the wagon, would it be unreasonable for Mark to seek an apology for what Maria believes of him? (Basu 2019A: 917).

In this case, the question is does Mark deserve an apology for Maria wrongly believing that Mark had been drinking. I claim that the answer to this depends heavily on the stakes. This time let P be the proposition that 'Mark was drinking'. And let's suppose that Mark has a history of becoming violent when he drinks, something that Maria has experienced first-hand. The costs

of believing P and being wrong are very high, they are a threat to Maria's personal safety. So, it would therefore seem that Maria would need very little evidence to be justified in believing P. On the other hand, if Mark has been working hard at his sobriety and never put Maria's safety at risk when he was drinking in the past, the costs of Maria being wrong by believing P are much lower and therefore the evidence required is higher. Here, the stakes/evidence relationship is inverted from the previous cases. So when we illustrate the Mark and Maria case on the pragmatic encroachment graph the proposition in question must be that **~P: Mark was not drinking**. It looks like this:



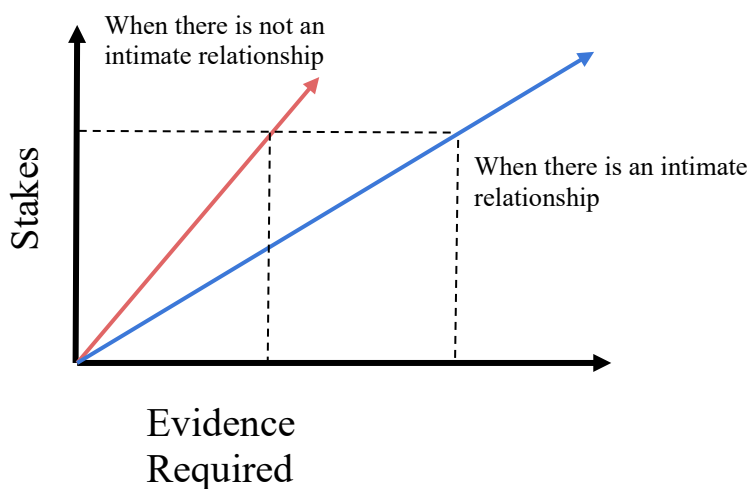
Notice here that if the cost of Maria being wrong about ~P is very high because Mark becomes violent when he drinks, the amount of evidence required to believe ~P is very high. However, if Mark has no history of mistreatment when he drinks and has a successful sobriety thus far, the cost of being wrong about ~P is low, and therefore the evidence needed to believe ~P is low as well. Thinking in terms of ~P is too complicated, so we are going to define cases like these as inverse pragmatic encroachment and create a graph that illustrates these cases in terms of P rather than ~P, with the proposition now being **P: Mark was drinking**. Inverse pragmatic encroachment looks like this:



This is much more straightforward. If Mark gets violent when he drinks, the stakes are very high because Maria's safety would be in jeopardy. Therefore, the evidence required for Maria to believe that Mark was drinking is very low - something as small as a wine stain on Mark's sleeve would be sufficient. On the other hand, if Mark had been successfully sober and never a safety risk to Maria even when he was drinking, the stakes are much lower and therefore the evidence required for Maria to believe that Mark was drinking is much higher.

Pragmatic encroachment and inverse pragmatic encroachment explain the correlation between the stakes and the evidence required in holding a belief. However, I claim there is a third dimension to this connection. As I proposed in Chapter 1, our relationship to one another has an impact on the power our beliefs have to wrong. In terms of pragmatic encroachment, I suggest that when the belief is about friends, family, or others we have an intimate relationship with, when the stakes are higher we need *more* evidence to believe something bad about them. Sarah Stroud argues that sometimes what we owe to our friends (and those we have an intimate relationship with) goes against our morals and even potentially our epistemic systems. Because of this, Stroud says that we have the right to be *epistemically partial*, or to allow our bias for loved ones to influence our analysis of the evidence presented to us (Stroud 2006: 499).

Here is an example to illustrate Stroud's point: suppose Andrew and Chris have been happily married for five years, Chris has been nothing but a wonderful husband to Andrew and is known as an incredible friend and family member by those close to him. Chris is accused of sexually harassing one of his co-workers. In virtue of their relationship it seems that Andrew has the right to be epistemically partial, and exercise a bias in virtue of his intimate relationship with Chris when analyzing the evidence. This would mean Andrew would need more evidence than someone who does not know Chris in order to accept the belief that Chris did in fact sexually harass one of his co-workers. To illustrate this, here is a diagram for pragmatic encroachment in an intimate relationship:



As you can see by the dotted lines, for the same belief with the same stakes, those in an intimate relationship with the person they are forming the belief about require much more evidence to be justified in forming and accepting that same belief. This is because those in an intimate relationship have the right to be epistemically partial.

Now, let's bring this full circle by explaining how the Cherry Street and Elevator cases discussed in Chapter 2 are further motivated by the concepts of pragmatic encroachment, inverse pragmatic encroachment, and pragmatic encroachment in an intimate relationship. In the Cherry

Street case, a black boy walking down the street forms the belief that the white cop driving past him is racist and may harm him. This case is an example of inverse pragmatic encroachment: the stakes are so high and the history of racist cops is so well documented that the boy needs very little evidence to believe that the cop driving down the street is racist and may harm him. In the Elevator case a white woman forms the belief that the black man in the elevator with her is dangerous. Here, regardless of what the woman might claim, the stakes are not high. Therefore, the white woman in the elevator is subjected to pragmatic encroachment rather than inverse pragmatic encroachment. In order for her belief that the black man in the elevator is dangerous, she must have an incredibly large amount of evidence.

The purpose of introducing pragmatic encroachment, inverse pragmatic encroachment, and pragmatic encroachment in an intimate relationship is to show how crucial context is in evaluating the permissibility of someone else's belief. This brings me to my final comment about wronging through beliefs: when evaluating whether or not people's beliefs are rational/irrational/permissible/impermissible/justified/unjustified, we rarely know the full story. It may be easy from the outside looking in on all of the cases presented in this paper to claim that someone doxastically wronged someone else through their belief. However, oftentimes the reality is that we do not have enough evidence to determine this. The Wounded by Belief case with Mark and Maria highlights this well: the case says nothing about his behavior when he drinks, a factor that is incredibly relevant in deciding whether or not Maria owes Mark an apology. For this reason, I urge readers to take away from this paper that rather than attempting to police the beliefs of others, we should work on policing our own beliefs by questioning and improving our own epistemic systems and belief formation processes.

This thesis may have created more questions than it answered. There is significant complexity associated with evidentialism, moral encroachment, doxastic wrongdoing, and pragmatic encroachment that was highlighted in this paper. Because of this, there are several areas I would be interested in exploring further. First, I believe my argument would be stronger if I could better define what it means to have an ‘intimate relationship’ with someone. Stranger in Your Own Home case proved that being neighbors constitutes an intimate relationship, so it would be beneficial if a point of further discussion was where we should draw the line between an intimate relationship and a relationship that is not intimate. The second piece of my argument I would like to expand on further is creating a framework of inverse pragmatic encroachment in an intimate relationship. It is a modification of pragmatic encroachment that is interesting in theory, but I found difficult to put into writing.

Of course, these are just a few things I hope to explore further down the line. However, I found this thesis to be a catalyst in the critical examination of my own beliefs. I hope it does the same for all readers.

Works Cited

- Basu, Rima, Mark Schroeder (2018). “Doxastic Wronging”. Routledge, (181-205).
- Basu, Rima (2019A). “What we epistemically owe to each other”. Springer Nature B.V. (915-931).
- Basu, Rima (2019B). “The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs”. Springer Nature B.V. (2498-2515).
- Basu, Rima (2021). “A Tale of Two Doctrines: Moral Encroachment and Doxastic Wronging”. Oxford University Press. (99-118).
- Dretske, Fred (2000). “Perception, Knowledge, and Belief: Selected Essays”. Cambridge University Press. (1-284).
- Faulkner, Paul. “What Is Wrong with Lying?” International Phenomenology Society. (535–57).
- Gardiner, Georgi (2018). “Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment”. Oxford University Press. (1-26).
- Gardner, John (2005). “Wrongs and Faults”. Philosophy Education Society. (95–132).
- Kerubo, Jacquelynn. “What Gentrification Means for Black Homeowners”. New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/17/realestate/black-homeowners-gentrification.html>. Accessed 10 October 2021.
- Munton, Jessie (2019). “Beyond Accuracy: Epistemic Flaws with Statistical Generalizations”. Wiley Periodicals. (228-240).
- Smith, Angela M. (2011). “Guilty Thoughts”. Oxford University Press (1-34).
- Stroud, Sarah. “Epistemic Partiality in Friendship.” *Ethics*, vol. 116, no. 3, The University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 498–524, <https://doi.org/10.1086/500337>.
- Thompson, Michael (2004). “What is it to Wrong Someone? A Puzzle about Justice”. Clarendon Press. (333-384).
- Toole, Briana (2020). “Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology”. Cambridge University Press. (1-19).
- Toole, Briana (2020). “Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology”. Cambridge University Press. (1-19).