What We Epistemically Owe To Each Other

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> Little Girls Playing. Sweet.
> One beach-colored. One brown.
> One Loved.
> One Loved a Little Less.
> — Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

The conference has ended, and the organizers have had the forethought to book a number of tables at a nearby restaurant so that conversation can continue over dinner. You're having a good time at dinner and, after a few drinks, you get up to use the restroom. As you return to your table, one of the diners, Jim, attempts to get your attention and says, "Where's my water? I asked for a refill fifteen minutes ago." For a moment you're confused, then it dawns on both of you what mistake has been made. Most philosophers don't look like you. With regard to melanin levels, you share more in common with the wait staff than your fellow diners. Given your skin color, the likelihood that you are a member of the staff rather than a fellow diner was high enough to seemingly make it rational for Jim to assume that you were a waiter, not a fellow diner. The belief that Jim had—and in turn his actions—might amount to a social faux pas, but, given that the belief seems to have been well-supported by the evidence, the belief—and in turn his act—was reasonable. He's not a bad guy; he just made an honest mistake. Of course, in the moment you don't reason through all of that. In the moment, you quickly laugh it off, eager to return to your table and dinner conversation. Later, however, you notice that you can't stop thinking about the interaction, and you wonder why such a small thing is still bothering you. It's not just the act that's bothering you: something about your colleague's *belief* that you were a waiter is keeping you up at night.

This paper is about an overlooked aspect—the cognitive or epistemic aspect—of the moral demand we place on one another to be treated well. The example of mistaken identity introduced above is a commonplace experience for many people. In *Slumdog Millionaire*, Jamal is mistaken for a tour guide while he himself waits for a tour of the Taj Mahal. In *Miss Saigon*, Kim is mistaken for a maid when she enters a hotel room. Barack Obama has been asked to get coffee even when dressed in a tuxedo at a black-tie dinner.[1] There are many examples. The hurt that is felt, I will argue, cannot be explained by only pointing towards the differential treatment that Jamal, Kim, and Barack Obama experience in how people act towards them or what is said of them, they are also wronged by *what is believed of them*. As I will argue, in all of these examples, there is a failure to relate to others as one ought that encompasses not only word and deed, but also thought.

To establish that there is something that we epistemically owe to each other, I begin by first bolstering the intuitive case for the proposal that beliefs can wrong. In Section 1, I canvass cases in which we feel hurt by what others believe of us. The diversity of cases in which we seem to have this practice of seeking apology for what others believe of us and in which we are hurt by what others believe of us raises the following question: why isn't it a common sense view that beliefs can wrong? Once the intuitive case for the proposal that beliefs can wrong has been made, in Section 2, I turn to the questions of what it is that we epistemically owe to each other and where these moral-epistemic obligations come from. Finally, I end in Section 3 by considering two challenges.

1. Examining Cases

My preliminary goal is to bolster the intuitive case for the following two proposals: beliefs can wrong and there is an epistemic dimension to what we owe to each other. As a result, this section is primarily case-driven. The diversity of cases in which beliefs seem to hurt, wound, and wrong raise the question of why philosophers haven't taken these two proposals seriously. We

[1] As Obama notes, "there's no black male my age, who's a professional, who hasn't come out of a restaurant and is waiting for their car and somebody didn't hand them their car keys." See: http://people.com/celebrity/the-obamas-how-we-deal-with-our-own-racist-experiences/

commonly speak of being hurt by beliefs and seeking apology for beliefs. Consider, for example, the following intuitive case.

> *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?[2]

It is common practice to make claims such as the following: "You shouldn't have believed that of me."[3] This kind of case and the common practice it exhibits suggest that we do, in our ordinary lives, hold people accountable for their beliefs.

Perhaps the reader is not convinced of the intuitive nature of the claim that Maria's assumption of Mark's indiscretion harms Mark. First, you might object that Mark is not wronged until he has clarified that he hasn't had a drink. Perhaps Mark has only been wronged if Maria continues to believe that he has had a drink *after* he has clarified that he hasn't. You might think

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[2] This case is borrowed from Basu and Schroeder (2018).

[3] One might worry that the truth of these "should" claims requires an impossible (or at least false) thesis of doxastic voluntarism. If our belief-forming practices are involuntary, one might think it futile to make demands on belief. In response to this, I would argue that we are often responsible for beliefs we cannot even indirectly control. It is my view that we cannot believe at will for any reason whatsoever; though we can (and often do) voluntarily select what evidence we look for and how we choose to interpret it and weigh it. I take our beliefs and how we respond to evidence reflects (or expresses) certain evaluative stances that we take. We can, as Pamela Hieronymi (2006, 2008) suggests, exercise indirect long-term control over many of our beliefs by choosing how we engage in inquiry, what sources we look to, etc., and those whom we wrong through our beliefs can properly demand that we evaluate evidence in both epistemically and morally appropriate ways therein developing our epistemic/moral characters. I take it as a datum that an epistemic character is bad or undesirable if it would allow the person endowed with it to come to believe that someone is more likely to be a waiter on the basis of their race. We can demand that all people show more moral care than this with regard to their beliefs about others. Just as we are responsible and can be held accountable for the development of our moral character, I suggest that we are responsible and can be held accountable for the development of our epistemic character; though, as stated above, control is not necessary for moral responsibility on the view I favor. For more on this, see Basu and Schroeder (2018).

this must be right because Mark would not deserve an apology from her unless she discounted his testimony.

Here we simply face a clash of intuitions. I suggest that what Mark is owed is an apology whether or not he declares his innocence. Again, my hypothesis is that his relationship with Maria allows him to expect better of her and entails that she believe better of him and not immediately settle on the belief that he had a drink—even when the evidence strongly suggests that he did.[4] Mark would be *further* hurt if Maria continued to believe that he'd had a drink after he'd explained that he hadn't, but there would remain the initial hurt before any exchange occurs, and it is natural to interpret this hurt as a response to the harm done to Mark when Maria falsely concluded he'd been drinking. A further hypothesis, which I aim to support in Section 2, provides a more general diagnosis of the kind of harm done Mark in this instance, namely that Mark has been wronged because his partner has taken an agent-neutral stance when forming beliefs about him.[5]

Second, you might object that Mark is not wronged by what Maria believes of him; rather, she has *violated his trust,* and he is reacting to that (as are we when reading of what she's done). Perhaps Mark would be satisfied with an apology for Maria's violation of their mutual trust. In response, I grant that Maria's belief may be an indication of her lack of trust, and it is that lack of trust that wounds Mark. But, it does not follow from that that Mark is not also wounded by the belief. A slap in the face is typically painful in its own right and indicative of someone's ill will towards you. We desire and expect that others will not slap us or intentionally

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[4] See also Sarah Stroud's (2006) related work on the moral demand on friends that they believe better of their friends. I discuss Stroud's work in more detail in Section 2.

[5] You might worry here that Mark's response in this case—feeling wronged by Maria's belief and insisting that she not believe that he has been drinking—is a tactic commonly used as a tool of emotional abuse within relationships. For example, imagine Mary and Hannah. Mary has been cheating on Hannah, and when questioned about who she's been texting, Mary feigns that she's been wounded by Hannah's request. Surely, Mary insists, if Hannah truly loved her she would trust her, Hannah wouldn't insist on looking at Mary's phone and snooping through her texts. This demand for partiality, this demand that Hannah grant Mary special leeway and discount the evidence before her illustrates how abusive practices are distortions of standard interpersonal expectations. Further, that these demands for partiality can be effectively used within a relationship both for good and for bad provides further evidence for thinking that the demand that one not take an agent-neutral stance towards the attitudes one forms of their partner is a practice we expect within relationships.

hurt us in other ways just as we desire and expect that they will not feel ill will towards us at all, at least without good reason. The more general and abstract desires do not detract from the fact that we are wounded by the slap, and can rightly seek an apology for the slap. Similarly, a belief may be indicative of a lack of trust, and what we want is that there be trust in our relationship. This does nothing to detract from the fact that we are wounded by the belief, and can rightly seek an apology for the belief.

There are, of course, other ways to argue that Mark is not harmed by Maria's belief in *Wounded By Belief*. For instance, one might suppose that Mark is harmed not by Maria's belief but by the expression of that belief in word or deed. After all, it is built into the case that Mark knows that Maria has rashly concluded that he's been drinking, something he could not know if she had successfully hidden this belief from him. Alternatively, one might agree that it is Maria's belief that harms Mark and not just her failure to keep that belief from him. Nevertheless, one might insist that it is not the mere fact of believing that harms Mark because the falseness or inaccuracy of Maria's representation is an essential component of the wrong it creates.

I offer the following two cases in response to these objections as they suggest that someone can be wronged by a true belief that is never revealed.[6]

> *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?

[6] *The Racist Hermit* and *The Security Guard* have both appeared in previous work (Basu Forthcoming). In "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs" I use these cases to argue that the wrong of the belief cannot be fully located in or explained by only the downstream features of the belief, i.e., the believer's action. This is part of my argument that part of the wrong done in these cases must be located in the belief itself. This paper is a continuation of the previous project by showing how the racist hermit and other characters I've presented in my work demonstrate a moral failing which is an instantiation of a more general way in which we can wrong others through what we believe: by failing to give them what they are owed.

We can suppose that the hermit is a product of the institutional structures that support racism, but we are hard pressed to say that the hermit contributes to these structures given his isolation. Moreover, we have supposed that the hermit's belief is true, and it is clear from the case as described that this belief in no way affects Sanjeev. Certainly, Sanjeev will never learn of its existence. Nonetheless, I have the intuition here that the hermit is still doing something wrong. If you think that only actions or words said to a person can wrong, then in this case you'll have to say that the hermit does not wrong Sanjeev, because Sanjeev will never learn of the hermit's belief. In contrast, I suggest it shows that neither harm nor knowledge of harm are required to be wronged. For example, if Sanjeev's partner were to cheat on him but he never found out, it is a commonly accepted intuition that Sanjeev would still have been wronged. As many recognize, we care about how our families and friends will fare after we're dead even if we are firmly convinced that how they fare cannot affect us in any way. The harm is a *relational* harm: the hermit fails to relate as he ought.

To continue to warm the reader up to the idea that a relational harm or wrong is done in this kind of case, consider the following.

> *The Security Guard.* Jake is a security guard at a fancy department store. He hates the company he works for, and he couldn't care less if people shoplift and cost the company money. One day, Jake sees Jada leave the store and comes to believe that Jada shoplifted the purse she's carrying. But, given his contempt for his company, he chooses not to intervene or act on his belief in any way. Has Jada been wronged by what Jake believes of her?

I think Jada has been wronged by what Jake believes of her. If we put ourselves in Jada's shoes, we don't want people to believe of us that we stole the purse. We care what people believe about us.[7] Consider, too, the following analogous case from the movie *Pretty Woman*. Vivian Ward, played by Julia Roberts, is an escort who has been hired by Richard Gere's character, Edward Lewis. Edward gives Vivian money for a new wardrobe. Vivian visits a store in Beverly Hills, and the first shot when she enters the store is the reaction from the workers in the store. Although she reminds them she has money to spend, the clerks refuse to believe her and ask her to leave.

[7] See also Patricia Williams's (1992, pp. 44-46) retelling of her experience in a Benetton store.

One might argue that the wrong committed in this case is exhausted or entirely constituted by how the store clerks *acted* towards Vivian. But this is not true to the experience. You need only ask almost anyone you know with a darker tint what it feels like in a store where people believe you will shoplift. People may not always follow you around, they may not always act any differently towards you, but that they believe you will steal or that they believe you can't afford anything in the store *hurts*.

Finally, before one dies of exhaustion from cases, one may be convinced by *Wounded By Belief* that belief can wrong, while limiting wrongful belief to false convictions. You might think that *if* Mark had been drinking, he wouldn't have been wronged by Maria's belief. Note, however, that in *The Racist Hermit,* the belief is true.

One issue here is whether only "epistemically" wrong beliefs can harm. Though the hermit's belief is false, those who think it is never wrong to believe as one "epistemically ought" might point out that the truth of the hermit's belief doesn't have *the right connection* to the evidence. Perhaps the belief is just *accidentally* true and that is why Sanjeev can be wronged even though the belief is true.

To evaluate this position, let us now consider one last case, one in which the believer doesn't accidentally have a true belief, but rather has a belief that is well-founded upon a careful consideration of the evidence. For this, let us consider Sherlock Holmes.

Within the fiction, people are constantly annoyed with and get mad at Sherlock Holmes for various reasons. Sherlock Holmes is an excellent example someone who engages in the kind of morally objectionable statistical reasoning I find in the previous cases. Further, he engages in this kind of reasoning with regard to every person he meets. Further, without fail, the people he encounters agree with me in finding the beliefs he forms about them to be insulting. Sometimes it's because it is a negative belief, e.g., that someone is sexually promiscuous on the basis of mannerisms that increase the likelihood that they are sexually promiscuous. But other times, people respond negatively to his belief even when about mundane things, like what they ate for breakfast. What remains in common is the manner in which Sherlock Holmes forms beliefs about people. He observes everyone as objects to be studied, predicted, and managed.

Of particular interest for this paper, I will be suggesting that the annoyance Holmes's interlocutors express stems from some as-of-yet-unarticulated moral demand with regard to forming beliefs about others that Sherlock Holmes consistently fails to meet. Consider the following scene from the 1985 movie, *The Young Sherlock Holmes*:

> SH: Wait--let me. Your name is James Watson. You're from the North, your father's a doctor, you spend much time writing, and you're fond of custard tarts. Am I correct?
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> JW: My name isn't James, it's John.
>
> [...]
>
> SH: Very well, so your name is John. How did I do on the others?
>
> JW: You were correct. On every count. How is it done? Is it some sort of magic trick?
>
> SH: No magic, Watson. Pure and simple deduction. The name-tag on your mattress reads "J Watson". I selected the most common name with "J". "John" was my second choice. Your shoes aren't made in the city. I've seen them before when visiting the north of England. Your left middle finger has a callus, the trademark of a writer. You were carrying a medical book not available to the general public, only to physicians. Since you can't have been to medical school, it was given to you by an older person, someone who is concerned for your health: Your father, the doctor.
>
> JW: And the custard tarts?
>
> SH: Simple. There's a stain of yellow custard used in making tarts on your lapel, and your shape convinced me you've eaten many before.
>
> JW: There's no need to be rude.

Of course, Holmes engages in this kind of reasoning with regard to every person he meets. And, without fail, the people he encounters find the beliefs he forms about them to be insulting. People respond negatively to what Sherlock Holmes believes about them, whether it concerns their culpability in a crime or what shoe they put on first. I conjecture that as a general matter we feel wronged when people look at us the way that Sherlock Holmes looks at us. We feel wronged by

the way that Sherlock Holmes forms beliefs about us. As we turn to Section 2, I will explore the theoretical resources we have available for explaining why the stance Holmes takes towards others is a failure to give them what they are epistemically owed.[8]

Returning to our task at hand, i.e., bolstering the intuitive case for the proposals motivating this paper, let me now summarize this wide array of cases. What is common to all of these cases is this nagging intuition that we can be wronged by what others believe of us. Further, the beliefs we are wronged by needn't be negatively charged beliefs, i.e., something that most people would not want believed of them. Beliefs that wrong include "observation[s] of trifles."[9] What these cases suggest is that there is a way of relating to others in not only our actions and words, but also our thoughts that seems to wrong, that seems to be upsetting.

2. On How We Ought Relate to Each Other

Returning to our dinner companion Jim, we can imagine Jim offering the following apology: "My evidence supported that you were a waiter, not a conference participant, so I had the attitude I epistemically ought to have had towards you being a staff member as supported by my evidence." Further, he might add, "When I believed you were a staff member I did not actively feel any ill will towards you, nor exhibit indifferent disregard." Jim just believed in accordance with the evidence and the evidence available to Jim overwhelming suggested that you were a waiter not a fellow dinner companion.

Jim's excuse, however, seems insufficient for two reasons. First, for reasons already discussed, Jim's harmed you not only by how he acted but also what he believed. So his apology that addressed the action and not the belief is insufficient. Second, the apology is insufficient

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[8] One might worry that Sherlock Holmes's tendency to form beliefs about others in the way that he does is something that is impossible for him to correct. If we assume that Holmes is neurodivergent in this respect, then I'm inclined to agree that his obligations to others are mitigated. Folks who are neurotypical may be able to relate to others in ways that are impossible for Sherlock Holmes. Perhaps Sherlock Holmes cannot but relate to others as though they are objects or causal phenomena, and as a result, a moral theory that concludes that Holmes is constantly wronging others seems perverse, it compounds his plight. This objection is part of a larger problem in moral philosophy concerning neurodiversity, disability, and the demands of morality. For the time being, I must set this issue aside, but I want to thank Regina Rini for pressing me to think more about this issue.

[9] See Doyle, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*.

because it does nothing to assuage the feeling of resentment one bit. You are still mad at him. It would be all too easy to dismiss these feelings as irrational. As I will argue in this section, it is not irrational to be upset in these cases. Jim has done something wrong, and that one has these feelings of hurt, anger, indignation, and resentment when these events happen should be taken seriously. As Audre Lorde (1984) has famously noted, our feelings are a source of evidence and information. Similarly, P. F. Strawson (1962) has argued that our reactive attitudes such as resentment are often good indicators that some moral demand hasn't been met. Thus, as a methodological point, let us take seriously this feeling of resentment and try to uncover its source to determine what wrong has been done that the apology fails to properly address.[10]

In what follows, I further explore this intuition by describing these reactive attitudes in an attempt to identify what moral demand has not been met in these interactions. This exploration will be guided by an attempt to identify what an appropriate apology would look like. I suggest that anger or dismay is an appropriate reaction to the beliefs in question because these beliefs express or betray moral indifference or insufficient regard. They are responses to a way of looking at another person not as a person, but as an object that is determined by causal laws, as something whose behaviour is to be predicted. It is to step back from seeing them as person. Naturally, that is upsetting. As for the question of what it is that we epistemically owe to each other, my argument here will be indirect. I will show that there is a tradition within moral philosophy that recognizes a cognitive or epistemic dimension to what we owe to each other. These various accounts within this tradition are intelligibly gesturing at the same idea about how we ought relate to one another: we can fail in what we owe to each other not only with regard to word and deed, but also with what we believe.

[10] One might object that anger is not the appropriate response because anger is not virtuous. It might be reasonable or excused to feel anger, after all, it can be morally exhausting to be magnanimous or forgiving or to laugh off the fifth time you've been pulled over by police or mistaken for a staff member. Nussbaum (2016) puts forward such an argument. But, as her critics note, anger plays an important role as a response to injustice in the world and provides importance information and evidence about injustice (see Bell 2009, Srinivasan 2016, 2017, Bommarito 2017, and, most notably, Lorde 1984). For the purposes of this paper, I will just follow the latter's assumptions about the role of emotions in guiding inquiry into injustice.

As we think about what we owe to each other, let us start with a Kantian idea. As Rae Langton (1992) explicates it, there is an important way in which we relate to other people that is characteristically different from how we relate to objects. This idea stems from the following picture of the world and our place in it. We, as human beings, find ourselves in a world that consists of things—tables, chairs, corn, cotton—and we try our best to understand how this world works, e.g., why plants grow when watered, why dogs only give birth to other dogs and never cats, etc. To understand the world we turn to science as a way of discovering these patterns in nature. But, we not only try to understand how things work, we think also about how to use them, i.e., how they can be used as a resource, as a means for human ends. Further, according to this Kantian picture, each of these things can be priced and each is essentially replaceable.[11] But, the world consists not only of things; in it, there are also people. It is then, "in our dealings with people, [that] we have a different way of going on, though it is hard to capture just what that is" (Langton 1992, p. 486). It is in an effort to capture just what that is that Langton turns to Strawson to find the following idea:

> We don't simply observe people as we might observe planets, we don't simply treat them as things to be sought out when they can be of use to us, and avoid when they are a nuisance. We are, as Strawson says, involved. (Langton 1992, p. 486)

What is it to be involved? Strawson (1962) argues that insofar as we stand in relationships with one another, we are susceptible to a wide range of responses from resentment to love to shame, etc. This is characteristic of *the participant stance*. Of these responses, a narrow class—closely associated with responsibility and blame—are often referred to as the 'reactive attitudes'. These reactive attitudes are characteristic of *being involved* as they are reactions to the attitudes and intentions people have towards us, and they concern a connection between the attitudes and moral demands. Further, a significant part of being so involved concerns according a certain importance to others' attitudes and intentions towards ourselves and being cognizant of those

[11] Although I am sympathetic to this general Kantian picture, there are many things to dislike about it. For example, it is not the case that all things in the world in virtue of not being people are thereby essentially replaceable, nor can they be essentially priced.

demands with regard to our treatment of others. Strawson argues that we ought take an involved stance towards others and recognize that, just as our own self-understanding relies on the attitudes that others take towards us, so too does their understanding rely on the attitudes we take towards them. Extending this idea we can presumably hold that the participant stance creates demands upon the beliefs we hold of others.[12]

We can find a similar thought when we try to account for one of the many harmful consequences of systematic and institutional racism (and other -isms). To see this, let me turn to a very general observation about the human condition that lays behind Strawson's participant stance. We each conceive of ourselves under a variety of more or less stable conditions, from marginal ones such as being born on a Friday to quite central ones such as being a philosopher, being a spouse, etc. The more central self-descriptions are important to our sense of self-worth, to our self-understanding, and constitute our sense of identity. They are the way in which we understand who we are and where we stand in the world. When these central self-descriptions are ignored in favor of what we are expected to be on the basis of our race, on the basis of our gender, on the basis of our sexual orientation, we can be wronged.

For example, imagine mistaking a white man at a Beyoncé concert for a staff member rather than a concert-goer. A mistake has been made; a wrong has been done. You failed to relate to him as he sees himself, and instead formed a belief on the basis of well-founded statistical evidence concerning the racial demographics of concert-goers and staff at a Beyoncé concert.[13] You, in short, observed him in the way a scientist observes the planets. Still, though we can grant that there is wrong in this case, it is much less severe than the wrong done to members of marginalized groups when we form beliefs about them from outside the participant stance and therein treat them as objects. The difference depends on the way in which members of marginalized groups are *dispositionally vulnerable* with respect to their self-descriptions while members of dominantly-situated groups are not. There is something more that is epistemically owed when it comes to our attitudes and beliefs towards members of non-dominantly situated groups.

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[12] Much of my thinking on this topic has been influenced by Steve Bero, in particular Bero (MS).

[13] Thanks to Gabbrielle Johnson for suggesting this case.

To draw on Desirée Melton's (2009) work, to be dispositionally vulnerable involves an awareness of dependence on others for understanding and respect. Yes, we are all invested in how other people see us, but these concerns are exacerbated, for example, in the case of racial and gender oppression, of homophobia, and prejudice against those with disabilities. The members of historically oppressed groups are more dependent than others on external validation for the maintenance of self-respect and self-esteem. We might owe everyone the kind of moral care exemplified by the participant stance, but we owe some people more than others due to the way in which they are more dependent on others for their self-descriptions. To help illustrate this point, consider W. E. B. Du Bois's famous introduction of the concept of double-consciousness.

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (1903, p. 5)

When you are a member of a non-dominantly-situated group, you must see yourself through two self-conceptions. First you see yourself how the dominantly-situated group sees you; second you see yourself how you wish to see yourself. An inner conflict arises when those two perspectives inevitably clash. This is the difference between the white man at the Beyoncé concert and the case of mistaken identity that opens this paper. The first person might be mistaken for a staff member, but given the structure of our society, he does not suffer from this feeling of double-consciousness. For example, as de Beauvoir (1949) notes, the white male perspective is considered the universal perspective. After all, the white man at the Beyoncé concert can earn a living and engage in a healthy social life without understanding, recognizing or in any way representing the attitudes taken to him by members of oppressed minorities. Because of the balance of economic, social and political power in the community, non-dominantly situated members of a community must internalize the dominantly-situated's perspective on them whereas those who are dominantly-situated can largely ignore the resentment they are generating. When Barack Obama, Kim, and Jamal are mistaken for staff members, their central

self-descriptions, the descriptions from which they draw their sense of self-worth, are deeply challenged. This suggests that there is a moral duty to ameliorate this kind of harm by being more careful in our belief formation when it comes to members of non-dominantly situated groups.

What we are epistemically owed then, could be the adoption of a Strawsonian participant or Kantian involved stance: one that requires believers to acknowledge one another as persons and not things. Precisely what is owed can vary along a number of dimensions, but regardless we can recognize that *something* is owed alone these lines.

A primary source of resistance, however, can be found in Darwall (2006). So, I turn now to addressing this Darwallian challenge. Stephen Darwall (2006)—in a manner similar to both Kant and Strawson—argues for what he calls *the second-personal standpoint*, i.e., the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another's conduct and will. In speech, we can see this perspective in performatives such as demanding, apologizing, etc. In thought, we see this perspective in Strawsonian reactive attitudes like resentment and guilt. The reasons that stem from this standpoint—namely, second-personal reasons—derive from our relations with one another. Importantly, Darwall distinguishes this second-personal stance from the third-person perspective, i.e., where we regard each other "objectively" or "agent-neutrally".

But Darwall explicitly denies there is a cognitive element to the second-personal stance. Although he argues that the second-person standpoint is the perspective we take up whenever we make valid claims or demands on someone else (whether explicitly in speech or implicitly in thought), he also argues that this epistemic authority is third-personal as opposed to second-personal. As Darwall (2006, pp. 56-7) notes:

> [W]hat reasons people have to believe things about the world depend in many ways on where they stand in relation to it. But ultimately their reasons must be grounded in something that is independent of their stance, namely, what is the case believer-neutrally. Our beliefs are simply the world (including our place in it) as seen (committedly) from our perspective; what we should believe depends ultimately on the world as it actually is.

There is something right to Darwall's claim here, but there is also something that he misses. What he misses concerns how the relationships we stand in with each other changes the stance we ought take towards the reasons that ground our beliefs. But first, let me start with what Darwall gets right.

According to a classical evidentialist or truth-oriented perspective in epistemology, ordinarily, when it comes to settling the question of whether to believe *p*, all that you should take into consideration is whether *p* is true, and correspondingly, reasons that are likely to get you onto the truth of *p*. In this way, reasons for belief are, as Darwall suggests, *stance-independent*. The role of our beliefs is to accurately capture the world *as it actually is*, not how we would like it to be.[14] However, even if we accept that we ought believe in accordance with our evidence, we can still ask the question of when the evidence is sufficient to justify belief. We recognize that in some cases we need more, and stronger, evidence than in other cases. For example, we require more evidence when passing judgement in a criminal case than when settling a playground dispute. Although Darwall does note that what reasons we have to believe things depends on the ways and where we stand in relation to it; the reasons we have to believe things depends also on the stance we take towards others. Our standards for justification are not stance-independent. Crucially, in order to meet the moral demands in our relationships, these standards must be *stance-dependent*.

Consider, for example, the moral requirement that we believe better of our friends. Sarah Stroud (2006) argues that we have special responsibilities toward our friends that we don't have toward strangers that extend beyond our actions. Being a good friend also requires a kind of epistemic partiality. What we ought believe of our friends crucially cannot be something that is independent of our stance towards them. That is, we should not be neutral with regard to how we respond to evidence about our friends. Similarly, Sarah Paul and Jennifer Morton (2018) argue that within the context of significant relationships, the default perspective we should take towards one another is the *rational perspective*. This perspective is contrasted with the *diagnostic stance* in which you view another person as an object whose behavior can be

[14] I should briefly note that this point is controversial and rejected by many pragmatists. See, for example, Zimmerman (2018).

explained and predicted like a mechanism. The rational perspective, on the other hand, requires viewing others as rational beings to be engaged with on rational terms. As there are multiple evidential policies that are rationally permissible for a given thinker to have from the point of view of purely epistemic considerations, what evidential policies we employ can be shaped by our relationships with others. On such an account then, when we doubt our loved ones, we can wrong them if that doubt is the product of an overly low evidential threshold for adopting the diagnostic perspective. In short, what we believe of others is not stance-independent.[15]

In a related vein, Berislav Marušić (2015) notes that the stance we take to beliefs about what we will do in the future is importantly different from the stance we take towards other beliefs. If you want to accomplish something important to you, but the statistical evidence suggests you are unlikely to accomplish that thing, you are often warranted in believing you will succeed anyway. You should believe against the evidence in a case of this kind because whether you succeed is (at least in part) up to you. Further, those who are partial to us, such as our friends, lovers, our spouse, etc. would be wronging us if they didn't also believe in our success against the evidence. In virtue of being close to you, they should exhibit a similar kind of doxastic partiality to what we discussed above. As Marušić (2015, p. 2) notes:

> [W]e cannot be scientific observers of ourselves without distorting our agency. In particular, when something is up to us, we distort our view of what we will do if we seek to predict what we will do—even if our predictions are based on excellent evidence. Similarly, we cannot be scientific observers of others without distorting our relationship to them. In particular, if we are close to them, we distort our relationship if we seek to predict what they will do—even if our predictions are based on excellent evidence. Agency and partiality require a view

[15] For a similar account of moral encroachment on our evidential threshold for justification, see Basu (2018, chapter 3) and "Moral Encroachment and the Moral Stakes of Racist Beliefs" forthcoming in *Philosophical Issues*, Bolinger (2018), Moss (2018a, 2018b). For a contrasting Strawsonian epistemology that is not cashed out in terms of evidential threshold, see also Marušić and White (2018) in which they argue that what is required of within our relationships and our shared activities of reasoning is an *epistemic permission* or a *default entitlement* to believe others.

> of ourselves and others that is incompatible with a fully naturalistic view, whether such a view is ultimately correct or not.[16]

Though I agree with Marušić (2015) that we have extra-evidential doxastic obligations, what he says here seems overly strong. Sometimes the way we show our thoughtfulness is by being good predictors of the people we care about. So, to simply say that the way in which beliefs can wrong is due to a kind of moral indifference that stems from a lack of care would not get us the full picture. Sometimes showing the amount of care that is demanded by the relationships requires treating one another as objects to be managed and predicted. We can accommodate this, however, by simply noting that not all objectification is bad. Sometimes it is licensed, excused, or even invited. Nonetheless, part of the wrong seems to stem from a problematic kind of objectification that accompanies precisely the sort of stance-independence that Darwall advocates.

With all of these pieces, we can now see why it hurts that you as a member of a marginalized group were seen as a waiter. Your fellow dinner patron—a person whom you consider an equal, a colleague, someone with whom you stand in a special relationship—fails to see *you*. Look again at the apology that's offered: "My evidence supported that you were a waiter, not a conference participant. So, I had the attitude I epistemically ought to have had towards you being a waiter as supported by my evidence. This belief wasn't motivated by any feeling of ill-will toward you, I was just believing in accordance with the evidence." We see in the apology that Jim takes this theoretical objective stance or diagnostic stance. He is responding as though he is a scientific observer explaining casual phenomenon in the world. But, that is precisely what he should be apologizing for. He should be apologizing for failing to acknowledge *you*. For failing to see why you would be invested in the attitudes he holds of you.

We can draw all these strands together to articulate what I'll call *the moral standpoint,* the stance that requires acknowledging one another as persons and not things. This standpoint draws on what is in common amongst these various accounts and articulates a common moral

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[16] Marušić's (2015) view is heavily influenced by Kant, Sartre, and Strawson. He uses Sartre's philosophy to develop what he calls a Sartean response—approaching the question of what to do as a practical question, not as a theoretical question—as another way of developing the Kantian dictum that we act under the idea of freedom, as well as Strawson's claim that we take a participant point of view toward ourselves.

demand: we must relate to others as people, not as objects.[17] What I have shown, more significantly, is that the wish to be related to as we are, as we see ourselves, not as we are expected to be on the basis of our race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. is not only common-place, this common-place and common-sense thought integrates well with both our pre-theoretic and theoretical intuitions.

3. Closing Notes

My goal has been to make plausible the claim that fulfilling our obligations to others involves not only being sensitive to how we act towards each other and what we say of each other, but also what we believe of each other. In short, that there is something we epistemically owe to each other. In closing, I want to acknowledge two challenges to the view that I have advanced.

First, in the cases presented in this paper, we've seen a number of ways in which beliefs can wrong. A belief could be a threat to your moral standing, it might be a negatively charged belief, it might cohere with an existing social stereotype, or it might involve some problematic objectification. Note, however, that calling out someone for enjoying or even abusing a social privilege also seems to satisfy these conditions. For example, in her discussion of white fragility, Robin DiAngelo (2011, p. 54) notes that sometimes acknowledging one's white privilege can be a threat to one's moral standing. If being good, kind, compassionate, egalitarian, etc. is central to your conception of your self, then being told that you are complicit in perpetuating racist structures or institutions is a threat to that understanding. For this reason, those who enjoy social privileges because of their racial or economic status often respond to the identification of these privileges with bursts of anger when one is "called out" on one's privilege. Similarly, imagine a black child is walking the streets of Chicago when he sees a white male police officer. Suppose that the child then forms the belief that the police officer is a bad cop who will (or has) probably engaged in police brutality against other black residents in Chicago.[18] But suppose, however, that the cop is a good cop that has never engaged in police brutality and wishes that others would stop

[17] Erin Beeghly (2018) raises important challenges to fully articulating what is morally wrong with not treating someone as an individual. I haven't tried to answer these challenges here, but have introduced an important starting point for recognizing that there is something that we epistemically owe to each other.

[18] Thanks to Briana Toole for suggesting this case.

assuming the worst of him. Again, it is central to his conception of himself that he is one of the good cops, not one of the bad cops. Has he been wronged by the black child's belief?

To answer these cases I turn back to the discussion of dispositional vulnerability from Section 2. Neither the white participant in Robin DiAngelo's anti-racism training seminar, nor the white male police officer we have just described are dispositionally vulnerable. Their sense of self-worth will be reaffirmed for them through structural features of their environment. Both need only turn on the TV and consume almost any piece of media to see countless positive portrayals of white males (and police officers). This is not something that exists for non-dominantly situated groups.[19] Nonetheless, these cases do demonstrate that more needs to be said to capture exactly what is owed and when it is owed. What we owe to each other is going to be more multi-faceted and complicated than the simple imperative to relate to others as people and there have been some attempts to articulate other explanations, either in place of or alongside dispositional vulnerability, of how we can fall short in what we epistemically owe (see, for example, Schroeder's 2018b account of *diminishment*).

To complicate this challenge further, we might imagine a case wherein the identity of a member of a dominantly-situated group is in fact directly threatened, insofar as that identity is constituted by their dominant relations to others, and those dominant relations are susceptible to being abolished in favor of more egalitarian relations. Consider, for example, that a white man might be used to receiving privileged treatment in his everyday life compared to the treatment of black men. His privileged status is therefore a part of his self-conception (whether he recognizes its existence as depending on the mistreatment of his black male counterparts or not). Then equality initiatives that aim to balance the socio-political scales by taking away this privileged treatment—replacing it instead with equal treatment for both—would necessarily threaten his ordinary self-conception. As a result, according to the account of dispositional vulnerability offered so far, the equality initiatives are a threat to his self-understanding. We are, insofar as we are social creatures, all dependent on one another for understanding and respect. However, as this

[19] This is also amongst one of the many reasons that *representation matters.*

worry brings to light, much more needs to be said about the distinctive dispositional vulnerability that underprivileged, as opposed to privileged, groups face.[20]

A second challenge we can raise is that sometimes we must recognize objective facts about others, and what we epistemically owe to others is recognizing the way in which their sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. shape how they are able to move through the world and what their experiences of the world are likely to have been. Consider, for example, the following poem by Pat Parker (1978), "For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend".

> The first thing you do is to forget that I'm Black.
>
> Second, you must never forget that I'm Black.

To understand each other, we must not forget that human beings aren't just free to define themselves as they wish.[21] There is a kind of Sartrean *bad faith* we'd be engaging in if we acted as though we are totally free to define ourselves despite how others see and interpret us. Human beings are complicated, and how we ought relate to each other is similarly complicated. What we must hedge here is what Mark Schroeder (2018a, pp. 5) calls the *Kantian Gambit*.

> *If and when* you interpret someone's behavior in causal terms, this explanation goes, you take the objective stance toward them, and *if and when* you take the objective stance toward someone, you thereby preclude the participant stance.

As Schroeder goes on to note, sometimes treating someone as a person is compatible with treating them as a thing, and sometimes treating someone as the thing that they are is how we successfully engage with and understand that person. Perhaps given these complications, there are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions we can state for when beliefs wrong. Instead, the best we can do is to develop our epistemic characters so that we respond correctly to the morally relevant features of our environment in a virtuous manner.[22] The task, then, is to identify what

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[20] Thanks to Gabbrielle Johnson for pressing me to say more on this point.

[21] Thanks to Wendy Salkin, Serene Khader, and Aarthy Vaidyanathan for all pressing me to say more on this point. Also, thanks to an anonymous referee for the Pat Parker poem.

[22] Perhaps we already have reason to think there exists a moral-epistemic virtue of this kind: *being woke*.

the morally relevant features of our environment are.[23] Note, however, that if we take this challenge seriously we must also grant that there is something that is epistemically owed. The question remaining is just what that thing is.

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[23] I take up this task in my discussion of moral encroachment and how the moral stakes of our social situations can raise the evidential threshold for justification in Basu 2018 (chapter 3) which is also forthcoming as "Moral Encroachment and the Moral Stakes of Racist Beliefs" in *Philosophical Issues*.

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