

How Can Beliefs Wrong?— A Strawsonian Epistemology

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ABSTRACT. We take a tremendous interest in how other people think of us. We have certain expectations of others, concerning how we are to figure in their thought and judgment. And we often feel wronged if those are disappointed. But it is puzzling how others' beliefs could wrong us. On the one hand, moral considerations don't bear on the truth of a belief and so seem to be the wrong kind of reasons for belief. On the other hand, truth-directed considerations seem to render moral considerations redundant. In this paper, we argue that to understand the possibility of doxastic wronging, we need to understand beliefs, no less than actions, as ways of relating to one another. In particular, how we take account of what others think and say will depend on whether we take up what P. F. Strawson calls the participant stance toward them. We show how this helps to make sense of an example Miranda Fricker identifies as a case of epistemic injustice. We then use the example to spell out the ethical significance of Tyler Burge's idea that we have a default entitlement to accept at face value what we receive from a rational source.

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We take a tremendous interest in how people think of us. Our self-esteem significantly depends on the judgment of others. On Rousseau's view, our *amour-propre*—the self-love that depends on the value judgments of others—is the occasion of our moral downfall (1755/1997). And on Sartre's view, our self-consciousness is the consciousness of how we are seen by others. As he puts it: "By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself . . . I recognize that I *am* as the Other sees me" (1943/1956, 302).

Yet if our self-esteem, our self-love, and our self-consciousness depend on the judgments and beliefs of others, those judgments and beliefs should have ethical significance. Others' judgments and beliefs should be able to do us justice or, sometimes, injustice. And indeed, it seems natural to hold that we ought not to think certain things of other people because to do so would be wrong—morally wrong, not just mistaken. If one believes others are inherently inferior because of their race or sex, this is insulting and disrespectful. It is so even if one's behavior is in strict conformity with others' rights and one keeps one's opinions to oneself so that they never find out; the wronging, in this case, is relational.¹ There are other examples. For instance, the charge of being overly judgmental, or of "rushing to judgment" about another person (about the depth of another's character flaws, say), seems to be at least partly a moral criticism—especially when leveled against friends and loved ones.

Nonetheless, there is something puzzling about the idea that believing might itself be morally wrong. One source of resistance to the idea is that one cannot choose what to believe and hence cannot be under a duty to believe one thing rather than another. There is something to this. But it does not really articulate the core problem, since the point that we cannot choose our beliefs seems just to assume that morality concerns itself exclusively with what is subject to a person's will. What underlies this assumption?

If the fact that we cannot form beliefs at will seems to disqualify them from moral assessment, this is due to standard assumptions about reasons for belief. If my believing that *p* would be wrong, or would wrong *you*, then the fact that I am under a moral obligation not to believe *p* would seem to be something I should take into account in making up my mind on the issue. But having a moral obligation not to believe *p* does not appear to be the right kind of thing to provide a reason not to believe *p*. This is because it is hard to see how the fact that it would be wrong to *believe p* could bear on the truth or falsity of *p* itself: it would seem to be a reason of the wrong kind—and so it would seem to commit the moralistic fallacy in epistemology.² Call this the wrong-kind-of-reasons problem.

The wrong-kind-of-reasons problem gives rise to a further, deeper problem. It suggests that any argument to the conclusion that it is morally wrong to believe *p*

1. Nagel (1970) speaks of relational harms—harms such as betrayal, which, to be harms, needn't be apprehended by the harmed person.

2. See D'Arms and Jacobson (2000) for the articulation of the moralistic fallacy in the context of the emotions.

would have to proceed from the premise that p was false—or at least unsupported by the evidence. And if that were so, then one could not come to justifiably disbelieve p on the basis of the thought that to believe it would be morally wrong. The justification for this latter thought would be provided by the fact that p was false, or unsupported by evidence. Therefore, if there is some moral obligation not to believe p , it seems it cannot do any normative work in determining that one should not believe p . It does not provide a reason that a rational thinker could take into account in answering for herself the question of whether or not p is true. Call this the redundancy problem.

The two problems are connected, in the sense that attempts to solve one of them just seem to land us in the other. Thus, the wrong-kind-of-reasons problem is a problem because having a moral obligation to believe something does not seem appropriately connected to the truth of that belief. This presents difficulties for views that conceive of the relevant moral obligations as underwriting an epistemic entitlement and also for views that see moral considerations as potentially overriding the epistemic considerations. It seems, then, that we are left with the possibility that it is instead the epistemic considerations that underwrite the moral considerations, so that what is morally acceptable tracks what is epistemically rational. But now we're faced with the redundancy problem. What normative work is morality left to do if it is conceived of as merely a derivative of the epistemic permissions and prohibitions?

We hold that the wrong-kind-of-reasons and the redundancy problems are the main obstacles to seeing how beliefs could wrong. Thus, when we ask how beliefs can wrong, the question is to be understood as a how-possible question: How is it even possible that beliefs wrong—as they often seem to—since moral considerations seem to be either of the wrong kind or redundant? It is this question which we propose to address.

The plan for the paper is as follows: In section 1, we will offer an initial proposal of how to understand doxastic wrongdoing by developing some reflections on Kant and Strawson. In section 2, we will consider Miranda Fricker's (2007) influential account of epistemic injustice and argue that it falls prey to the redundancy problem. We will also identify a broadly Strawsonian thought in her view and suggest that, though it offers important ethical insight, it is in tension with the general epistemological framework in which she situates it. In section 3, we will offer a different way of understanding the basic form of epistemic injustice at issue. We will argue that in shared reasoning doxastic wrongdoing could be understood in terms of a failure to meet a standard of mutual answerability. In section 4, we will offer a general explanation of the possibility of doxastic wrongdoing by proposing a Strawsonian epistemology.³

3. We owe the label "Strawsonian epistemology" to Kornblith (forthcoming). Kornblith uses it to characterize the position of Marušić (2015), which is explicitly presented in Strawsonian terms. He borrows the label from Willaschek (2013), who uses it in a somewhat different context.

1. KANT AND STRAWSON

To explain how beliefs could wrong, we need some understanding of what wronging consists in. However, it is beyond the scope of our paper to explain wronging in general. Rather, we will argue that beliefs can wrong *in just the way that actions can wrong*; there isn't a distinctive way in which beliefs wrong. To argue for this, we will take our point of departure from Kant and Strawson.

In formulating a version of the Categorical Imperative, Kant famously says: "A human being and generally every rational being exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means for the discretionary use for this or that will, but must in all its actions . . . always be considered at the same time as an end" (1785/2011, 4:428).⁴ We think that the core idea of the Categorical Imperative is to articulate the insight that our way of relating to people is categorically different from our way of relating to objects. Christine Korsgaard sums it up well when she says, "The subject matter of morality is not what we should bring about, but how we should relate to one another" (1993, 24). People are ends in themselves, not mere means. But being an end is not a property—like being embodied is. It is, rather, a relational state: Means and ends are ways of conceptualizing things in *practical reasoning*. To be an end (in itself) is to play a certain role in practical reasoning: a practical reasoner will reason about ends (in themselves) differently than about mere means. Therefore, to be an end just is to be *regarded* by practical reasoners in a certain way.

The Kantian way of thinking about morality contains an insight that holds the key to the explanation of how beliefs could wrong: sound reasoning relates us to people differently than to objects. But insofar as Kant's focus is on practical reasoning, it does not speak directly to our topic, which concerns beliefs and, therefore, *theoretical* reasoning. Nevertheless, with the Kantian view in mind, we can raise the corresponding question with regard to the latter: might our moral relations to other persons—and the requirement to respect them as rational beings—have implications for how they ought to figure in our theoretical reasoning, as well as our practical reasoning? We'll approach this question by turning to the work of P. F. Strawson, who develops the Kantian view in a way that affords a better understanding of how beliefs could wrong.

In "Freedom and Resentment," Strawson draws a contrast between two opposing sorts of attitudes we can take toward people: the participant stance and the objective stance (1962/2008). The participant stance consists of the attitudes characteristic of participation in interpersonal relations and interactions: for example, gratitude and resentment. We resent it when others fail to meet our basic expectations, and we feel gratitude when they demonstrate special concern for our interests. These "reactive attitudes," as Strawson calls them, "rest on, and reflect, an expectation of,

4. In this formulation, Kant identifies actions alone as governed by the Categorical Imperative and, therefore, as the only subject of morality. But why the restriction? One way to make sense of this is to note that actions, unlike beliefs, are understood in terms of a structure of means and ends: we act as a means to an end, but we don't believe as a means to an end.

and demand for, the manifestation of a certain degree of goodwill or regard on the part of other human beings towards ourselves; or at least on the expectation of, and demand for, an absence of the manifestation of active ill will or indifferent disregard” (1962/2008, 15). When we expect others to treat us in certain ways, this reflects a more fundamental expectation, or demand, that they take us—our interests and concerns—into account in certain ways. We resent it, for instance, when a person treats us in a way that shows he does not view the harm it will cause us as providing much of a reason for forbearance. It is this, rather than the harm itself, that justifies resentment. (If it turns out that he had no reason to think that he would cause us harm by his action, any lingering resentment will seem inappropriate.)

It is obvious enough that others’ conduct can manifest a failure to show us the regard we expect and demand. Might it not also be the case that the beliefs others harbor can likewise manifest a failure of regard for us? On its face, it is not much of a leap to extend Strawson’s account from the regard others show us, to how they regard us—from action to belief.⁵ If so, it would seem to provide a sense in which beliefs can, like actions, constitute wronging: one wrongs another person when one’s beliefs and judgments fall short of the regard the other is entitled to expect from one.

On the Strawsonian picture, the idea of a wronging belongs to the domain of interpersonal relations characterized by the participant stance.⁶ Strawson writes, for instance, that the demand for regard is inseparable from the susceptibility to the reactive attitudes: “[T]hese attitudes of disapprobation and indignation are precisely the correlates of the moral demand in the case where the demand is felt to be disregarded. The making of the demand *is* the proneness to such attitudes” (1962/2008, 23). It is thus from the point of view of participation or involvement with other persons that we recognize the legitimacy and significance of such a demand. On this picture, then, it will make sense to see a special moral hazard in approaching other people as we would mere forces of nature—seeing them as to be “managed or handled or cured or trained,” as Strawson puts it in describing what he calls “the objective attitude” (9–10). To take a wholly objective attitude toward a person is to oppose a conception of one’s relationship to that person as intelligibly governed by reciprocal expectations of mutual regard. What we hope to make plausible is that the participant stance that is distinctive of our relations with other persons as such implicates our doxastic responses to them no less than our intentions and actions. On our view, the ways in which beliefs wrong don’t differ categorically from the ways in which actions wrong—and there isn’t a normative ethics of belief that is distinctive from a general normative ethics.⁷

5. The entry for “regard” (n.) in the OED conveys the ambiguity of the term, which can be understood in a more practical or more theoretical sense—variously as “estimation,” “concern,” “admiration,” “appearance,” “aspect,” and “respect.”

6. For elaboration of this claim, see especially Darwall (2006).

7. For a normative ethics of doxastic wronging in the spirit of Strawson, see Basu (in preparation). For difficulties that a Strawsonian must account for, see Schroeder (forthcoming).

2. FRICKER ON EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

To provide a focus for our discussion and show how the Strawsonian account of doxastic wrongdoing might be fleshed out, we begin with a case that Miranda Fricker has offered as a paradigm of what she calls “epistemic injustice” (Fricker 2007).

Fricker presents an example from the film *The Talented Mr. Ripley*—an exchange between Marge Sherwood and Herbert Greenleaf, who is the father of Marge’s missing fiancé, Dickie. The elder Greenleaf fails to take seriously Marge’s (accurate) suspicions about Ripley’s involvement in Dickie’s disappearance. Thus, when Marge discovers a ring she had given to Dickie in Ripley’s room, and presents it to Dickie’s father as evidence of foul play, he is dismissive: “Marge, there’s female intuition, and then there are facts” (Fricker 2007, 9, quoting Minghella 2000).

Fricker’s claim about this case is that Herbert Greenleaf, through his sexist dismissal of Marge’s suspicions, does her an *injustice*. It is not merely that Herbert has every reason to view Marge as a credible source of information relevant to the matter of Dickie’s disappearance. It is that Marge is entitled to be viewed in this way. Herbert thus wrongs her in her capacity as one who is in a position to provide such information. Fricker’s description of this as a kind of injustice seems apt. The question is how we are to make sense of it.

Fricker argues that epistemic injustices in general, and testimonial injustices in particular (e.g., Herbert’s incredulous response to Marge), constitute injustices and not merely epistemic failures in virtue of the way they serve to undermine a person in respect of capacities that are essential to her humanity. She writes:

In all such injustices, the victim is wronged in her capacity as a knower. To be wronged in one’s capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value. When one is wronged or otherwise undermined in a capacity essential to human value, one suffers an intrinsic injustice. The form that this intrinsic injustice takes specifically in cases of testimonial injustice is that the subject is wronged in her capacity as a giver of knowledge. (2007, 44)

One might read this passage in a couple different ways. First, Fricker might be read as suggesting that a proper acknowledgment of a speaker’s value as a human being requires that one treat what she says as credible. Not to regard what a person says as providing good (if not decisive) grounds for belief would be to insult or undermine that person in her capacity as a giver of knowledge, and thus demean her.

This, however, clearly is not what Fricker means to imply. As she is at pains to emphasize in her account of the epistemology of testimony, we often have good reason to doubt the veracity of what a person is telling us.⁸ Nor does she think that such reasons are somehow overridden by an ethical duty to respect the other as a giver of knowledge. On the contrary, the hearer’s basic obligation, she writes, is to

8. See Fricker (2007, ch. 3).

“match the level of credibility she attributes to her interlocutor to the evidence that he is offering the truth” (2007, 19).

A better reading of the passage, therefore, would take Fricker to be suggesting that one does an injustice to one’s interlocutor only if one fails to attribute to her the credibility that would be epistemically warranted under the circumstances. Marge is entitled to the credibility that the evidence available to Herbert would support, if only he were properly sensitive to it and not blinded by prejudice—but not more than that. Notice, however, that on this interpretation, a speaker is not directly entitled to be regarded as possessing the credibility and competence she *in fact* possesses. For her audience might have evidence that she is less reliable as a giver of knowledge than she in fact is. In Fricker’s view, such “innocent errors” will not count as cases of epistemic injustice.⁹ What matters, ethically, is that the hearer respond to the speaker in accord with his (the hearer’s) evidence, not that he respond as the actual facts about the speaker’s competence and sincerity would themselves license.

But at this point, Fricker’s account of epistemic injustice starts to get puzzling. For consider: the accumulated evidence to which a responsible hearer might be sensitive to, which bears on and informs her assessment of the speaker’s credibility, might have very little to do with the speaker herself, and might in fact be quite misleading about the speaker in her capacity as a giver of knowledge. This makes it hard to see why responding correctly to such considerations amounts to a kind of justice owed to the speaker herself. After all, in cases of innocent error, we might think the evidence itself serves to undermine the speaker in her capacity as a giver of knowledge (at least in relation to the hearer who possesses such evidence).

Furthermore, even assuming that the hearer does have evidence that supports giving credence to what the speaker says, it’s not clear why this should in any way be thought to reflect what the speaker is morally entitled to from the hearer. On Fricker’s account of the epistemology, it is the experience and information accumulated over time by the hearer, which provides inductive support for relying on the speaker’s testimony in this case, that supports the attribution of credibility. Here, it seems, we have an instance of the redundancy problem. The kind of background experience that would inductively support the conclusion that, for instance, someone in Marge’s position is likely to speak accurately and sincerely in a situation like this would seem to provide that same support—and thus failing to be responsive to it would seem to constitute the same rational fault—whether or not we assume Marge has a claim of *justice* to be believed.

There are really two points here. The first is that, in determining what, say, Herbert should believe, all the work is done by epistemic considerations whose rational role seems to have little to do with what Marge might be owed, morally

9. Indeed, for Fricker, even epistemically culpable “credibility deficits” will not necessarily count as instances of testimonial injustice as long as they are not grounded in prejudice toward the speaker. Fricker (2007, 21–22).

speaking. The other is that the relevant epistemic considerations, and the nature of the warrant they provide, seem too far removed from Marge herself, and her value as a person, to serve as a basis for a claim of justice on her part.

One might respond that the above points don't take sufficient stock of the fact that, in Fricker's view, it's essential to the form of injustice in question that the credibility deficit suffered by the speaker be the result of *prejudice* against the speaker. The operation of a prejudice against an identity group to which the speaker belongs does plausibly bear the right kind of personal relation to the speaker that makes it apt to speak of an injustice *toward her*. However, this response presents its own difficulties. Fricker's account takes the relevant testimonial wrong to be found in the way that prejudice can distort the hearer's responsiveness to evidence for attributing credibility to a speaker, and thus distort the hearer's doxastic response to the speaker's contribution. It's not clear, though, that this locates the wrong in the right place. It's true that Dickie's father not only fails to respond correctly to the evidence that Marge presents in support of her view that Ripley had something to do with his son's disappearance, but does so because of his prejudiced attitudes toward women. But the fact that his epistemically faulty response to the evidence pointing to Ripley's guilt manifests an offensive attitude toward women, and therefore toward Marge, does not on its own seem sufficient to establish that he wrongs *her* precisely *in* failing to respond correctly to the evidence she offers. There remains a gap here that needs to be filled.

To see this, consider the difference between Fricker's example and the following case. Suppose that Alfred notices the Rolex that Betty is wearing, but draws the conclusion (incorrectly) that it must be a fake—this, despite the fact that it has all the markers of authenticity. He draws this conclusion because he thinks it very unlikely that someone who looks and talks like Betty would be able to afford a Rolex. In fact, to make the analogy as close as possible, suppose that Alfred's attitude toward Betty includes a contempt for her in her capacity as a knower. He thinks, for instance, that she is the type of person who would be easily taken in by fraudsters peddling counterfeit timepieces. Alfred's prejudicial attitudes may be morally offensive in themselves; but should we say that he wrongs Betty *because* he infers, against the evidence, that her watch is a fake? It's not clear that we should. For it's not clear that his attitude would really be any less offensive or problematic were he to respond rationally to the evidence of the watch's authenticity and simply react with shock that someone like Betty had managed to afford such a Rolex—or managed not to be duped.

Alfred's mistake about the authenticity of Betty's watch seems, in itself, to lack the ethical significance of Herbert's refusal to countenance Marge's suspicion of Ripley or her claim that his possession of Dickie's ring is damning. While the prejudice itself is wrong, Alfred's belief that the watch isn't real doesn't itself seem morally wrong; rather, it indicates the presence of objectionable prejudice. The salient difference between the cases is that, whereas Alfred's snobbery and contempt for people like Betty lead him not to take the signs of the watch's authenticity sufficiently seri-

ously, Herbert's sexism leads him not to take *Marge* sufficiently seriously—he fails to take seriously Marge's own rational contributions to the matter under consideration, namely her reasons for thinking Ripley was involved in Dickie's disappearance. This makes it natural to describe Herbert as being dismissive, not just of what Marge says, and the evidence she presents, but of Marge herself. What remains to be accounted for is the aptness of this description, together with its ethical import.

In fact, Fricker herself draws a distinction that seems to point to an answer. The distinction (which she borrows from Edward Craig) is between treating a person as an *informant* and treating him merely as a *source of information*.¹⁰ The difference between these ways of relating to another person, she explains, is the difference between assigning him “the role of participant in the co-operative exercise of the capacity for knowledge,” on the one hand, and casting him in “the role of passive bystander—a role in which, like objects, he is able to exercise no greater epistemic capacity than that of featuring in potentially informative states of affairs” (2007, 132). As this way of putting it makes clear, the distinction between relating to someone as an informant and treating that person as just a source of information is an instance of the more general Strawsonian distinction between the participant and the objective stance.

We think that Fricker's explication of this distinction is entirely on point as a diagnosis of the wrong that Herbert commits against Marge. He does not regard her as a fellow participant in the distinctively *interpersonal* form of exchange in which her assertions, and the thoughts they express, are received as the contributions of a potential informant.

The problem is that there seems to be a tension between Fricker's general epistemology of testimony and her use of the informant/source of information distinction in explaining the sort of injustice on display in Marge and Herbert's exchange. In particular, if we return to her claim that a person's basic obligation, in assessing what another tells her, is to “match the level of credibility she attributes to her interlocutor to the evidence that he is offering the truth,” we seem to lose our grip on how the appropriate response to what a person says could be fundamentally any different from the rational response to any other possible source of information. For the recommendation seems to be that we are to adjust our beliefs in proportion to the evidence supporting a more or less reliable link between a certain state of affairs (a person's having said something) and the truth of a certain proposition (the content of their assertion).

What this tension in Fricker's view reveals is that, to make good on any distinction between “informant” and “source of information” that has the kind of ethical significance Fricker assigns it, we need to abandon the kind of evidentialism she presupposes for determining the proper response to an interlocutor. For we cannot make sense of the moral difference it might make whether we relate to someone as an informant or as a mere source of information unless we can identify some relevant

10. Fricker (2007, 132), cf. Craig (1990, 35).

epistemological distinction. And it's hard to see what that could be if we maintain that, at bottom, we ought to rely on an interlocutor to the extent that we have good inductive grounds for the proposition that, if this person—or, rather, a person like this—makes such-and-such pronouncement on such-and-such topic, in a situation such as this, it is likely to be true. Considerations of evidential support alone will not provide sufficient resources to draw the necessary moral distinctions.

Suppose, however, we had recourse to an expanded set of epistemological options. Consider, for instance, a view along the lines of that proposed by Burge (1993), according to which, in the absence of special reasons to be skeptical, we are rationally entitled, by default, to accept the deliverances of a person's use of her rational powers as a *prima facie* guide to truth. Such a view would provide the conceptual space needed to distinguish between the participant stance of regarding one's interlocutor as an informant, and the objective stance of regarding her as a source of information, and thus to articulate the wrong of epistemic injustice. Of course, this conceptual space must be filled in—and this is what we will do in what follows. However, the very possibility of an *epistemic permission* to regard another's exercise of her rational powers as in itself the kind of thing worthy of acceptance as a *prima facie* guide to truth opens up conceptual space for an *ethical requirement* to so regard her—as opposed to looking for some empirical justification for considering the person's thought or speech to be reliable, given the type of person she is and the situation she's in.

If such a conception is epistemologically sound, it offers a compelling route to understanding how there might be ethical norms governing our doxastic responses to other persons. It does this by helping us get beyond the idea that what a speaker is entitled to is that her audience not allow prejudice to distort their rational response to the available evidence. To relate to someone merely as a source of information does not, after all, imply that one's beliefs will be unwarranted, relative to the evidence available to one. Indeed, this is so even where a person's view of his interlocutor is tainted by prejudice. Imagine, for example, someone who is inclined to distrust the person speaking to her, on the grounds that he belongs to an ethnic group she despises and believes to be fundamentally dishonest. On this particular occasion, however, the hearer might nevertheless treat the speaker's statements as credible because she is aware of reasons why it would be very much against his interests to lie. If there is something problematic about the way this person relates to her interlocutor, in his capacity as a giver of knowledge, it is not that she puts less credence in what he tells her than the evidence warrants.

Further, in cases where we do find a credibility deficit relative to the evidence—for example, in Marge's exchange with Dickie's father—we think this is more a symptom than the source of the basic epistemic injustice. The root of the injustice that Herbert does to Marge does not lie primarily with his failure, in forming his opinion, to be adequately sensitive to the evidence (about Marge and about women generally) that what she says is credible. There is, rather, a more direct sense in which he fails to respond adequately to her reasons for being suspicious

of Ripley. Because of his prejudiced view of women, Herbert does not regard her suspicions, and her reasons for them, as calling for a direct answer. There is, after all, a difference between attempting to rationally respond to or explain away the troubling questions raised by Ripley's possession of the ring (the questions Marge is trying to raise with Dickie's father), and attempting to respond to or explain away the fact that Marge *takes* the discovery of the ring to raise such questions (as, for example, being nothing more than a product of irrational "female intuition"). Herbert is dismissive, not just of the epistemic value of the considerations she points to, but of the very possibility of engaging with her in a mutual exchange of reasons—a process by which they might together come to some conclusion. To put it succinctly, Herbert's wronging consists in the fact that he takes an *objective attitude* toward Marge.

Thus recall Strawson:

To adopt the objective attitude to another human being, is to see him, perhaps, as an object of social policy; as a subject for what, in a wide range of sense, might be called treatment; as something certainly to be taken account, perhaps precautionary account, of; to be managed or handled or cured or trained . . . If your attitude towards someone is wholly objective, then though you may fight him, you cannot quarrel with him, and though you may talk to him, even negotiate with him, you cannot reason with him. You can at most pretend to quarrel, or to reason, with him. (1962, 9–10)

Herbert refuses to *reason with* Marge. In explaining away the fact of Marge's *taking* the discovery of the ring to be significant as nothing more than a product of irrational "female intuition," he conveys that her words are not to be engaged with but explained away.

What we need, therefore, to understand the possibility of doxastic wronging, is an account of the alternative—an account of how we engage with others in a way that we regard them not merely as sources of information but as informants and, more generally, as fellow reasoners.

3. MUTUAL ANSWERABILITY IN SHARED REASONING

Strawson claims that taking a wholly objective attitude toward a person precludes reasoning with them. Reasoning with someone, in the relevant sense, is an essentially shared activity. If I am reasoning with you, then we are reasoning with each other. Contrast this with my *messing with* you, which does not involve your *messing with* me—though you might mess with me independently. Reasoning with you is opposed to regarding you merely as material input to my own reasoning—as just another object from which information might be gleaned and which is susceptible to various sorts of influence. If you and I are reasoning with each other—whether about what to think on some topic, or about what to do—we necessarily regard

ourselves as answerable to one another for our views. I cannot regard myself as reasoning with you with the aim of arriving at a shared conclusion unless I regard the reasons I take to support a particular view as reasons you, too, should accept as supporting that view. And if you have good reasons for thinking that the considerations I have to offer do not support the conclusion I am proposing to draw—perhaps because you are privy to background information I lack—then I will expect you to make this known to me and you will in turn expect me either to change my view of the matter or respond with some further consideration in defense of my position.

This standard of mutual answerability that characterizes reasoning with another person implies that, in reasoning with you, I recognize the claim that your thinking has on my attention and deliberation: there is a presumption that the claims you put forward will be taken seriously as either to be answered or acceded to. Contrast this with a case in which I take myself to have some “debunking” explanation of why you believe what you believe. Perhaps I think, for instance, that the fact that you take yourself to have good answers to criticisms of the scientific research program on which you’ve built your career is most likely the product of an understandable reluctance to admit (even to yourself) that your life’s work has ended in failure. Even if I am right about this, and am warranted in dismissing your responses to the criticisms on this basis, this is not the same as *answering* your doubts and objections. My own reasoning does not engage with or take your claims seriously. (It may, of course, be that in a case such as this, this is the response that is precisely what is called for—that the standard of mutual answerability doesn’t hold. We don’t claim that objectivity of attitude is always objectionable.)¹¹

The kind of mutual answerability that is constitutive of shared reasoning implies that when you and I reason together, we cannot regard each other’s contributions merely as additional evidence to be taken into account. For example, when we are reasoning together, the fact that you believe *p* is something I need to see as relevant; but its relevance is not that of a piece of information indicating that *p* is true. This is not because what you believe would bear no reliable connection to the truth. It’s because, at least in the normal case, your believing that *p* cannot be relevant in this way for *your* thinking; in the normal case, you cannot rationally rely on your own belief in *p* as a piece of information that speaks in favor of its truth and thus as a reason for you to believe it. And thus it cannot enter as a piece of information into our shared reasoning, inasmuch as it’s shared. Obviously, the same goes for facts about what I believe. In the normal case, the psychological facts about what we believe are, for us, not pieces of information that bear on the question of what is true; rather they are transparent to the reasons in light of which we form our beliefs in the first place.¹²

11. Schroeder (forthcoming) discusses a series of cases of when the objective attitude is not only unobjectionable but possibly even required.

12. In our paper “Disagreement and Alienation,” we distinguish normal and abnormal cases, and we argue that considerations about the standard of mutual answerability in shared reasoning bear importantly on the epistemology of peer disagreement (Marušić and White, in preparation).

There is, therefore, an important difference, in investigating a subject-matter, between adopting the participant stance toward another thinker and adopting the objective attitude—between being prepared to take seriously and engage with her reasons for thinking what she thinks and regarding her beliefs as information states—the states of an organism that bear more or less regular relations to other features of the natural world. Here, the difference between adopting the participant or the objective stance toward another is partly a matter of a difference in the kind of epistemic significance one ascribes to the other's judgments and beliefs.

With this account in hand, we can now see Herbert's wronging of Marge in a new light. His wronging does not consist in a failure to adequately respond to his evidence; rather, his wronging consists in a refusal to regard what she says as a reason that she means to share with him, and so a refusal to reason *with* her. Indeed, we think that this is at the heart of Fricker's insight that there is a difference between seeing someone as a source of information and as an informant.

Our observations about shared reasoning are, however, not confined to theoretical inquiry. As Rae Langton has argued, there is a more general connection between the participant stance and cooperative or shared activity—a type of interaction that is possible only between persons. In personal involvement with others, Langton writes,

You are prepared to *do something with them*, in a sense very different from the sense in which you might do something with a tool. When my friend and I make a cake, I'm *doing something with* my friend, and I'm doing something with flour, chocolate, cherries, brandy—but there's a difference. My friend, but not the flour, is doing what I am doing, sharing the activity. (1992, 487)

The standard of mutual answerability is, as a default, regulative for genuinely cooperative interactions between persons, whether theoretical or practical. When cooperating with another person to achieve some common aim, we frequently offer reasons why it would be better for us to go about things one way rather than another. We expect the other to take these reasons seriously, and we resent it if they don't. And we allow the reasons we've offered to be rebutted by comparable reasons the other has for preferring some alternative way of achieving our aim. Here, we regard the thoughts and suggestions of the other, not just as possibly indicating the presence of reasons, but rather as part of the reasoning process guiding our shared activity. This shows that, in the relevant cooperative contexts, how others figure in our reasoning is fundamentally different from how objects figure in it.

4. THE POSSIBILITY OF DOXASTIC WRONGING

Let us now offer a general explanation of doxastic wronging and then consider how to address the wrong-kind-of-reasons problem and the redundancy problem.

Doxastic wronging occurs when someone, through her beliefs and other doxastic responses (drawing conclusions, withholding judgment, etc.), falls short of another person's legitimate expectation to be regarded in certain ways—in particular, to figure in the other's reasoning in certain ways. This expectation is part of the bedrock of the participant stance: it is something that our reactive attitudes rest on. In this respect, doxastic wronging is not fundamentally different from other kinds of wronging.

We have thus far focused on the expectation of mutual answerability that those who reason together or do things together hold one another to. We've argued that meeting this expectation has implications for how one engages with and relies on others in forming one's beliefs. However, this is just one example. Just as there is an expectation of mutual answerability in shared reasoning, so there is an expectation that others regard us (and not merely treat us) with respect. We also expect, and normally think of ourselves as entitled to, the trust of our friends and loved ones. And there are surely many other expectations about how others are to think of us.

In general, we want to suggest, what is needed to understand doxastic wronging is a Strawsonian epistemology: we expect others to regard us in certain ways—which includes believing certain things of us—and these expectations are the grounds for our reactive attitudes. It is in this way that substance can be given to the claim that we relate to others not only through action but also through belief—and, generally, through all our reasons-responsive attitudes. (We can wrong others with misplaced fear, admiration, anger, or grief.)

To further illustrate this, let us briefly consider the clearest example of such directed belief—the case of believing *someone*. Anscombe famously said that “it is an insult and it may be an injury not to be believed” (1979, 150). And this is certainly true. However, this means that ‘believe’ must be understood as taking a person as its object, rather than a proposition. As Anscombe puts it, “Believing someone . . . is trusting him for the truth” (1979, 151). Elaborating on Anscombe's view, Richard Moran adds, “it is the speaker who is believed, and belief in the proposition asserted follows from this” (2005, 2). Indeed, this is a way to understand the very point that moves Craig to draw the distinction between informants and sources of information. Here is Craig, as quoted by Moran:

There are informants, and there are sources of information. Or, to arrange the terminology differently, among the various sources of information there are on the one hand informants who give information; and on the other there are states of affairs, some of which involve states of human beings and their behavior, which have evidential value: information can be gleaned from them. Roughly the distinction is that between a person's telling me something and my being able to tell something from observation of him. (Craig 1990, 35; cf. Moran 2018, 19)

We maintain that this is to be understood in Strawsonian terms:¹³ Believing *someone* requires taking a participant attitude toward them. And this opens up

13. See Marušić (2015, ch. 7; 2017) for elaboration. We think that the anti-Strawsonian position articulated by Kornblith (forthcoming) does not adequately explain what it is to believe *someone*. It also

conceptual space for regarding such directed beliefs as the grounds of our reactive attitudes.

To see this, consider an example: Suppose your rueful partner tells you that they will not betray your trust again. This confronts you with a unique opportunity: You could believe *them*. You could take them at their word and, in light of what they tell you, believe that they will, in fact, not betray your trust again. Alternatively, you could distrust them. However, you could also come to a view about what they will do without believing or distrusting them at all, but simply through an evidence-based prediction: For example, you could predict that, given the kind of person they are and the circumstances they find themselves in, they have a 60 percent chance of doing as they say. In this case, there is no room to believe *them*—since you take the facts to speak for themselves.

The example is meant to illustrate that we have, as Moran puts it, two “categorically different” ways of responding to someone else’s words (2005, 4): We can regard what another person tells us as an occasion to believe the other, or we can regard it as evidence of the truth. Unlike Moran, we propose to spell this out in Strawsonian terms:¹⁴ To regard what another person tells us as an occasion to believe the other involves taking a participant stance.¹⁵ And this means that believing someone will be embedded in the expectations and demands that our reactive attitudes are founded upon.

The point here, as in the discussion of Fricker, is not that whenever we fail to believe someone, we wrong them. The point is, rather, that when others tell us something, then we are confronted with a categorically different occasion for belief than when we encounter evidence: we have the opportunity to believe *them*. And this opens up conceptual space for doxastic wrongdoing, because it shows that belief itself can be a way of directly relating to another person—and, therefore, need not always merely be a response to evidence.

Why does this not expose us to the wrong-kind-of-reasons problem introduced above? It would do so only if there were something epistemically suspect about believing a person who tells us something. Yet surely this is not particularly problematic. Indeed, it’s plausible that the relation of *believing a person* corresponds to the default entitlement we have, according to Burge, to accept at face value what we receive from a rational source (1993). For Burge, it is our recognition of other persons as rational, and therefore as governed by norms that bear a constitutive connection to truth, that entitles us to believe what they tell us. The

makes it difficult to understand doxastic wrongdoing. Insofar as it seems plausible that doxastic wrongdoing is possible, this speaks against the anti-Strawsonian position.

14. Although we take our view to be inspired by Moran’s work, Moran resists the Strawsonian interpretation that we put forward (Moran 2018, 126 n.5). In particular, Moran resists the idea that testimony is to be understood in terms of second-personal reasons. Our interpretation of Moran’s insight is in the spirit of McMyler (2011).

15. Holton (1994) identifies trust as an element of the participant stance, though he resists understanding trust as a kind of belief. Marušić (2017) presents an argument that trust just is belief held from the participant stance.

fact of another's assertion does not constitute a new bit of information—a new piece of evidence—from which the audience may reason to the conclusion that the content of the assertion is (probably) true. Rather, it provides the medium by which the content and rational backing of the other's thought is communicated and preserved. In this way, we can understand a default entitlement to believe others as part of the structure of the participant stance.

This solution to the wrong-kind-of-reasons problem also provides us with a solution to the redundancy problem. The latter follows from the realization that warranted belief need not always and only be responsive to evidence. The crucial thought is that if there is more than one epistemically legitimate route to belief, there is space for morality to do some work. Thus, we might be equally *epistemically* entitled to believe something on the basis of evidence indicating the reliability of a person's utterance or to believe it on the basis of our default entitlement to believe the person herself, while being under a *moral* obligation to believe *the person*—to relate to her immediately in her capacity as a rational being, and thus as a *prima facie* guide to truth. This means, moreover, that we might wrong someone, in failing to believe her, whether what we end up believing is true or false. The conceptual space between ordinary induction and the kind of entitlement at issue in believing a person allows us to avoid the redundancy problem and thus to answer the “how possible” question.

As we stressed earlier, the case of relational belief—of believing *someone*—is but one example of many. We think that the Burgean default entitlement, if understood in the context of a broader Strawsonian epistemology, makes it possible to see how moral considerations bear on belief more generally. If, in our beliefs, we are not confined to consideration of evidence, but we are defeasibly entitled to accept the deliverances of a person's use of her rational powers as a *prima facie* guide to truth, we are defeasibly entitled to encounter the possessors of rational powers differently than mere objects. But it is plausible that this is not a mere entitlement but can also be something we normatively expect of one another. It is not only that others are epistemically entitled to accept the deliverances of our use of our rational powers as a *prima facie* guide to truth; it is that we can have a personal and ethical stake in whether they exercise this entitlement. The reasoning by which others arrive at their beliefs can matter to us in ways that go beyond our concern for the epistemic credentials such reasoning confers on their beliefs. It can matter to us because of what it means for our relations with other people—what it says about our standing, in their eyes, as potential co-deliberators and givers of knowledge. And where we can legitimately expect others to relate to us in these ways, they wrong us if they don't. Moreover, a host of other expectations will be connected with this expectation—for example, the expectation that we be regarded as someone who *is* a possessor of rational powers and who is in a position to inform and to pass on knowledge.

As we have noted in connection with the wrong-kind-of-reasons problem, there is no suggestion on this account that the relevant ethical considerations function

to turn (epistemically) bad reasoning into good reasoning. Rather, there is room to hold one another to distinctively ethical expectations, with regard to how we figure in one another's practical *and* theoretical reasoning, so long as we acknowledge epistemically sound routes to belief that can be distinguished from mere reliance on evidence. Such ethical expectations are revealed as conceptually coherent once we recognize that we are rationally entitled to encounter others—the possessors of rational powers—in a fundamentally different way than mere objects.

5. CONCLUSION

Our Strawsonian Epistemology is not an ethics of belief. We do not propose an account of what beliefs we owe to each other. Our Strawsonian Epistemology is merely meant to reorient contemporary conceptualizations of belief and point out what should have been obvious all along: that our beliefs, no less than our actions, are ways of relating to each other. This is not merely because beliefs are dispositions to action. It is because, in living with others, what matters is not only what others do to us but also how they think of us. For better or for worse, our very identity depends on the beliefs of others. And this entitles us to expect that they think of us in certain ways and not in others—whatever exactly those ways may be.

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