

The Degree of Inquiry Right: A Rights-Based Account of Doxastic Wronging

Abstract: This paper defends a novel account of doxastic wronging. According to this account, beliefs wrong only when they violate the *degree of inquiry right*. The degree of inquiry right is a moral right against other epistemic agents to inquire to a certain threshold when a belief undermines one's interests. Thus, belief formation—when the belief would undermine another's interests—is permissible only if it meets a certain threshold of evidence; otherwise, the agent must leave epistemic inquiry open. I argue that we have relevant interests in reputation, relationships, and the well-being of our social groups. When beliefs would undermine these interests, the degree of inquiry right makes belief formation harder to achieve. I then shift my attention to other views of doxastic wronging. I argue that this account of doxastic wronging makes better sense of puzzles that other accounts of doxastic wronging fall prey to.

I. Introduction

Rima Basu and Mark Schroeder (2019) endorse the view that beliefs can wrong other people. They argue that we can wrong one another by merely believing. Basu and Schroeder notably reject that beliefs can wrong in virtue of a rights violation, specifically a violation of a right to privacy. This paper shows that this assessment of doxastic wronging is too hasty. I account for doxastic wrongings in terms of rights violations—according to this right, we owe it to one another, as a matter of right, to do a more thorough investigation before forming beliefs that undermine another's interests.

In this paper, I show that touchstone views of doxastic wronging in the literature are misguided. I raise objections to *The Dominant View* of doxastic wronging. Of the several accounts in the literature, they all agree that doxastic wrongings are relational errors. The wrong-making feature of doxastic wrongings is that our beliefs fail to demonstrate a proper relation with the subject of belief. Basu (2019) and Marusic and White (2018), following P.F. Strawson, agree that doxastic wrongings involve taking up the objective stance when forming beliefs about others, while Schroeder (2018) argues that doxastic wrongings falsely diminish other people's agential contributions. The account I give here moves away from human relations as the wronging-making feature of some beliefs. I show here that doxastic wronging is best understood as a form of impermissible interest undermining.

I shall argue that doxastic wrongings are rights violation. To this end, I argue that Joseph Raz's interest theory of rights generates a right to a certain *degree of inquiry*. I show that when our beliefs threaten another person's interests, we owe him a more detailed investigation than if the belief did not have this effect. To this end, I argue that beliefs can undermine our interests—specifically, interests in reputation, in relationships, and in the well-being of our social group. According to this account of doxastic wronging, beliefs wrong (1) in virtue of the interests they violate and (2) only when such beliefs are formed on insufficient evidence. This account, unlike other accounts, shows that beliefs can wrong even when they are true and that potentially wronging beliefs are not completely off limits.

In the first section, I show that Joseph Raz's account of rights leads us to what I call a *degree of inquiry right*. The idea here is that we have a right that other people fulfill a certain degree of investigation before forming a negative belief about us. The degree of inquiry right is a rights-based account of doxastic wronging. I then use the vector-sum approach to rights to help define the contours of the right. In section two, I shift to the offensive. I argue that the dominant view of doxastic wronging runs into problems. I also show how my degree of inquiry right can make sense of motivating cases in the literature, while avoiding these problems. Then in the last section, I respond to several objections to my account: (1) a general moral obligation to charity more elegantly

accounts for motivating cases; (2) an interest in reputation is insufficient to generate any right at all, including the degree of inquiry right; and (3) my account implies that we should not—and cannot—believe victims of sexual assault when there is no evidence available outside of the victim’s testimony.

II. An Account of Rights and the Degree of Inquiry Right

This section lays out the *degree of inquiry right*. According to this right, we owe it to one another to meet a sufficiently high level of inquiry when a belief would undermine another person’s interests. Let us now turn to understanding the nature of rights. For the purposes of this project, I draw upon the account of rights from Joseph Raz (1984). I show that beliefs do undermine our interests in the manner necessary for Raz’s account. We, therefore, have a right—per Raz’s account of rights—against the kinds of beliefs that constitute doxastic wrongings. I first survey the nature of epistemic inquiry. I then argue that, according to Raz’s theory of rights, we have a right against others to inquire more into beliefs that undermine our interests.

2.1 A Brief Survey of Epistemic Inquiry

Before talking about rights, let’s turn to laying out some key features of epistemic investigation. First, investigation determines the credence we give to a proposition. According to dominant models in epistemology, investigation either raises or lowers the credence. Credence is the degree of confidence we ought to assign to a proposition, given our current evidence. Credences come on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 is certainty that a claim is false and 1 is certainty that a claim is true. When we investigate, we entertain evidence that either lowers or raises our credence.

Prior to an investigation we have a sense of how much investigation we will pursue. Renee Bolinger (2020) thinks we decide how much evidence we will entertain before we open an inquiry. Epistemic inquiry is constituted by a number of activities, e.g., conducting tests, interviews, seeking out evidence, etc. Before I begin investigating whether, for example, investing in a self-automated Roth IRA is a fiscally good idea, I need to decide how much effort to put into the investigation and how much counterevidence to entertain. I need to decide what level of credence is necessary for forming the belief that a Roth is a fiscally good idea. This does not preclude the possibility, however, that I adjust my inquiry based on what evidence I discover during inquiry. The point is that when we investigate, we decide in advance how much to investigate and what level of credence is sufficient for belief and action.

We can determine the degree of our investigation based on non-epistemic considerations. Consider again the IRA example. Since the stakes are high for me in this case, it is in my interest to do a thorough investigation and seek out lots of counterevidence. I, therefore, need to perform a higher degree of investigation than I would if, say, I were going to invest just one hundred dollars. This the second feature of epistemic investigation: The degree to which we inquire—and when we close inquiry—is sensitive to the stakes of the inquirer, and this is because the proposition in question is bound up with my interests.

The extent to which one ought to inquire is determined in advance by non-epistemic considerations. But we also use the same process when we inquire and form beliefs about each other. For instance, if I want to know who Kanye West is currently dating or his net worth, I would decide to do a Google search and then investigate from there. I know in advance, however, that I won’t spend my whole Saturday on the investigation, likely not even five minutes.

Now, it is often in *someone else’s* interest that we do a thorough investigation prior to forming beliefs about them. For instance, suppose that there are rumors going around that a faculty member has had a DUI in the past. Upon hearing this claim, these rumors open an investigation for me. I have a choice: I can either close my investigation and form the belief that the rumors are true, or I

can leave the investigation open and withhold belief. More specifically, if I am going to potentially hold a costly belief about the faculty member, then I owe it to him to perform a cost appropriate inquiry regarding that belief. It strikes me as intuitive that they would appreciate my not forming the belief based on the rumors. This person's reputation is on the line after all.

Why think we have an interest in what others believe about us? Here are a few reasons. First, what others believe about us largely determines the relationship we will have with those people. Basu and Schroeder (2019) point out that important beliefs about other people determine the sorts of interactions and expectations that we have about one another. Given the importance of interaction with other people, I have an interest in what other believe about me. Secondly, some beliefs are partially constitutive of our reputation. A good reputation is a desirable, beneficial thing. And I have an interest in being a trusted member of my community and not a social outcast. Needless to say, we care about our reputation because it determines how other people view us.¹

One last word about beliefs: Georgi Gardiner (forthcoming) distinguishes between two sorts of beliefs, risky beliefs and costly beliefs. She writes: Costly beliefs involve "costs [that] are negatives stemming from the belief, even if the belief is true." Risky beliefs center on "risks [that] are negatives accrued only if the belief is false" (4). For the purposes of my argument, I focus on costly beliefs—beliefs that diminish or tarnish reputation or affect relationships, even if the belief is true. I argue that the degree of inquiry right obtains even for true beliefs.

2.2 The Degree of Inquiry Right

Joseph Raz (1984) gives an interest theory of rights. Rights obtain in virtue of a subject's interests. Rights, according to Raz, are closely related to both the moral status of the rights holder and the interests of the being in question. If I have a right to, say, bodily integrity, then bodily integrity needs to be in my interest, and I need to be the sort of being that merits rights-based concern. Consider now Raz's account of rights:

Definition: "x has a right" if and only if x can have rights, and other things being equal, an aspect of x's well-being (his interest) is a sufficient reason for holding other person(s) to be under a duty. (195)

The Principle of Capacity to have Rights: An individual is capable of having rights if and only if either his well-being is of ultimate value or he is an "artificial person" (e.g. a corporation). (195)

I aim to show that we have rights pertaining to what other people believe of us. For my purposes, I will need to show that what others believe about us is sufficiently connected to our interests such as to warrant a right. My suggestion is that we have a right that others meet a certain threshold of epistemic inquiry before forming beliefs about us that can undermine interests.

Now let us turn to the degree of inquiry right. I believe that we have a strong enough interest in our reputation and what others believe about us to warrant a right to level of epistemic inquiry. If my forming a belief about another person will contribute to the demise of his reputation,

¹ There are a number of other interests that we have in what other people believe about us. First, Schroeder (2018b) identifies that some beliefs impose risks in virtue of possible actions that follow from the belief. It is clear that we have interests against such risks. Secondly, Marusic and White (2018) motivate the claim that beliefs wrong by appealing to fact that other people's beliefs promote and undermine our self-esteem, self-love, and self-consciousness (98). These are deeply held interests. Our interests—and how beliefs violate what's in our interest—seem to be the core motivation for doxastic wronging. My account is premised on this claim.

then I should ensure that I “do my homework” before I close investigation. That is, the mere utterance of the rumor should not be sufficient to both open and then close investigation. I owe it to the person in question to perform a cost appropriate inquiry because their interest in my beliefs merit a right against a hasty inquiry. If this is right, then I have a duty to ensure that I do my epistemic diligence when my beliefs are in another’s interest. Following Raz’s account of rights, consider the formulation of the degree of inquiry right:

Degree of Inquiry Right: Rights-bearer, X, has degree of inquiry right if and only if X has an interest—e.g., reputation or relationship—in a particular duty-bearer, Y’s, belief, B, about X; those interests are strong enough to ground a duty against Y; and X is the sort of being that can have rights, i.e., a being of “ultimate value.”

One strength of this account is that it is not too demanding. We can form negative beliefs but only after some threshold of investigation (which I mention shortly). Returning to the DUI case above, I am not precluded from *ever* believing that the faculty member did get a DUI. In fact, I can (and perhaps should) believe this, but this is only after I do my due diligence. On other accounts (which I shall mention later), it is doubtful whether I should form a belief at all in this scenario. These accounts are too strong. The degree of inquiry right, I suggest, is strong enough to give our beliefs a moral dimension without being epistemically neglectful.²

What about beliefs that are harmless? Consider the following “water cooler” conversation: “You know, I heard that Jim got a new dog this weekend.” This is a kind of gossip—talking about people without their knowing—but whether I form a belief a belief about Jim’s new dog does not seem to matter. So how can my account make sense of this case? Only beliefs that are of a sufficient interest for the person believed about require that we meet some standard degree of inquiry; that is, only costly beliefs matter for the right. Jim likely does not care whether I believe he bought a new dog because it will not change his reputation or how I relate to him, so the belief is not costly. More specifically, the stakes are not sufficiently high for Jim in this context. If they were higher, then I should engage in further inquiry before closing inquiry. Costly beliefs, therefore, are context sensitive.

However, in contexts where beliefs about dog ownership are costly—if, say, Jim and I were members of an underground anti-doggo syndicate—the belief would be subject to a higher degree of inquiry. As a matter of Jim’s interests and, consequently, his rights, I would owe him a more thorough investigation. This is because my belief that he adopted a dog generates a high stakes situation (because we would think differently of him if he owned a dog as a pet). The belief is costly in this context. These considerations highlight a strength of my account: it is context sensitive. We will see in the next section how this feature of the account can explain dominant cases for doxastic wrongdoing in the literature.

I mention one last relevant interest in passing, interest in the wellbeing of our social groups.³ Many of us hope that the social groups which we take part in fare well, both for us and for the other

² I should say something about the evidential strength of the initial testimony that opens inquiry. Suppose that what is sent around to the department is a video of the faculty member driving while proclaiming “I’m so drunk! In fact, way *too* drunk to drive!” In this case, the evidence that opens inquiry—the video—is strong enough to meet the faculty member’s degree of inquiry right and thereby close inquiry and form the belief. This case emphasizes that forming costly beliefs is consistent with my account: it is just whether these beliefs are formed too hastily that wrongs.

³ By *social group*, I have in mind Iris Marion Young’s account. According to Young (1990), a social group is “a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other social group by cultural forms, practices, or ways of life” (43). Social groups are not mere aggregates—like green-eyed people— or associations—like churches or political parties—but a

members of that group. I think that racist generalizations about our social group not only undermine the interests and wellbeing of our social group, but they also undermine our own personal interests. Thus, if I form a racist belief against a social group, then I also undermine the interests of each individual of that group and, thereby, violate their degree of inquiry rights.

Let me clarify the sorts of beliefs that are incorporated in the scope of the degree of inquiry right. Do we have a claim against others for ill-formed beliefs (1) that are (or could be) operationalized such that they lead to actions that undermine our interests or (2) any ill-formed belief that undermines our interests? Later in this paper, I argue that our reputation and our relationships are partially constituted by what others believe of us. Thus, I argue that the degree of inquiry right is a right against (2).⁴ It is not necessary, according to my account, that others operationalize ill-formed beliefs into actions that undermine our interests.

Following Leif Wenar's (1998) vector-sum approach, the degree of inquiry right is, I think, a weak right, i.e., a right that can be overridden by other interests. According to the vector-sum approach, we imagine scenarios where different rights are in place, e.g., a strong right or a weak right. We then examine how various versions of a right affect the interests of those in the scenario, e.g., a strong property right may, for instance, have crippling effects on the interest of someone who must cross a plot of land to get to a hospital. After totaling the sum of costs and benefits, we then plug the data into a normative theory, which renders the best version of the right. The degree of inquiry right, I argue, is a weak right after we consider the benefits and burdens of the right.

Let's now think through a case to with the vector-sum approach. I think the degree of inquiry right is a "weak" right. When a certain threshold of benefit is met, the degree of inquiry right might be outweighed by other moral considerations. Consider a surgeon who uses all her epistemic capacities on staying up to date with the most cutting-edge procedures in her field. Suppose that the surgeon learns that one of her residents is having an extramarital affair. For her, the costs of performing an additional inquiry into this rumor are more costly, i.e., her epistemic capacities are better spent elsewhere. These external considerations—the patients' interests in the surgeon staying up to date on the advances in her field—overrides the resident's interests in her reputation, according to some normative theories.⁵

What degree of credence is sufficient for forming a costly belief? I do not think every costly belief will demand the exact degree of credence. Following David Annis's objection mechanism for epistemic justification, the degree of credence necessary for meeting the degree of inquiry right will be whatever credence degree is necessary for *answering the most demanding and the most reasonable objections from the person believed about*. Annis argues that justification is context sensitive, where we must answer pressing objections—the strength of which is contingent upon the strength of the subject's interests. The believer, therefore, needs to be in a strong enough epistemic position to be able to answer the subject's objections. Such objections become increasingly far-fetched as the stakes in the belief rise.

In the next section, I contrast the degree of inquiry right against the dominant views of doxastic wrongdoing. My discussion shows that the degree of inquiry right is avoids issues that these accounts run into.

III. The Dominant View of Doxastic Wronging

group of people who share "a sense of identity... a certain social status... [a] common history and, [who] self-identif[y]" with the group (44).

⁴ But there might be a right against beliefs that are risky, i.e., could lead to further actions.

⁵ Different normative theories likely have different results here, but I think that of the dominant theories, e.g., deontology and consequentialism, the result will be a weaker right, as opposed to a strong right. Examining these theories and their verdicts on this case in detail would be too lengthy for this project.

I argue in this section that the degree of inquiry right better explains cases that motivate doxastic wrongdoing. Theorists argue that these cases substantiate an intuitive pull to the conclusion that beliefs wrong other people. This is not right because further inspection reveals that belief formation is the problem with these cases (and not necessarily the belief itself). And my account can explain the problem of hasty belief formation, where the dominant view of doxastic wrongdoing cannot. By analyzing these cases, I further flesh out the degree of inquiry right.

3.1 Against False Belief Accounts

Rima Basu and Mark Schroeder (2019) argue that we can wrong one another with our beliefs. What are examples of this sort of wrongdoing? One example in the literature is racist and sexist beliefs: *this person must be a server because she is black*. Other examples have to do with hasty beliefs formed in the context of close relationships. Consider the following 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? (Basu (2019), Basu and Schroeder (2019))

The idea here is that Maria has wronged Mark in virtue of the contents of her belief. They find it intuitive that Maria owes an apology because she fails to note Mark's accomplishment. But how does it work?

They argue that doxastic wrongings must meet three conditions:

Doxastic Wrongings must be (1) directed wrongings; (2) where it is the belief itself is what wrongs; and (3) the content of a belief is what wrongs.

Basu and Schroeder (2019) argue that the wrongdoing occurs in virtue of a relational wrongdoing. Beliefs represent the way in which we relate to the world: if I believe that the tiger is dangerous, then my belief will tailor the way in which I will relate to the tiger, perhaps I won't pet it like I would a fluffy cat. Similarly, beliefs about other people create certain relations we have with those people. My belief will influence the way in which I will interact with certain people.

It is noteworthy that beliefs are not wrong in virtue of the behaviors that follow them, according to Basu and Schroeder. Rather, it is the content of the belief itself that wrongs. Thus, Maria wrongs Mark like this: "Yes, you have a long history of falling off of the wagon, and yes, there is some evidence that this time is another. You can see how it could be reasonable for someone to draw this conclusion. But it still hurts—not least because in your eyes, tonight was an achievement to stay on the wagon despite adverse circumstances" (2). The content of Maria's belief undermines Mark's accomplishment; thus, Maria's merely believing of Mark that he drank wrongs him.

Would it, for instance, be unreasonable for Mark to demand an apology from Maria in this case? Basu and Schroeder (2019) and Basu (forthcoming) argue that it is not. This feature reveals the intuitive force that beliefs themselves can wrong. We can owe an apology for the belief itself because—Basu and Schroeder argue—apologies like the following are unsatisfying: "Well, I'm sorry for believing that you fell off the wagon, even though my belief was epistemically impeccable, short of being true" (19). What we owe, rather, is an apology for the belief itself, and not the plausible

epistemic processes. The core wrong making feature of all of these views is that we can fail to relate to one another as we ought in virtue of what we believe.

Schroeder (2018) offers a slightly different analysis of what makes these beliefs objectionable. He thinks that beliefs that *diminish* others are wrong. Beliefs that diminish others “bring them down” such that their agency is compromised. Schroeder writes: “What I mean is interpreting them in a way that makes their agential contribution out to be less. An agential contribution can be less because it is a worse contribution, but it can also be less because it is less of a contribution” (XXX). This account explains what is wrong about beliefs formed on racial generalizations and stereotypes: the person is not distinct from their reference class. Schroeder argues that only *false* beliefs that diminish amount to doxastic wrongings. Thus, the issue in *Wounded by Belief* is the fact that Maria falsely diminishes Mark’s agency and thereby brings him down.

Does my account of the degree of inquiry right capture the intuitive pull of *Wronged by Belief*? Yes! The noteworthy feature of the case is the spousal relationship. Recall I argued that the degree of inquiry right obtains if we have an interest in functional relationships. But it is not merely in our interest that we have a functional relationship with our spouse. It is important—and, therefore, in our interest—that one’s spouse think highly of her, that her spouse acknowledge her accomplishments. These are central, vital things to our interest. I, therefore, think that this interest generates a right for Mark that Maria violates. Maria hastily closes inquiry, and *that’s what wrongs Mark*. Intuitively, something is going on in this case, and my account explains what’s wrong.

My explanation is superior to the above account of doxastic wronging account. Consider a true belief version of this case: Mark in fact did fall off the wagon and drink at dinner. Schroeder (2018) argues that only false beliefs can amount to doxastic wrongings. Thus, if Maria forms the belief that Mark drank, she would not be wronging him. The fact that Maria’s belief is false informs the intuition that her belief wrongs him. But I find that there is still a moral issue in the true belief version of the case, and my account can explain that.⁶ The wronging that occurs in the true belief version of *Wounded by Belief* is Maria’s hasty closing of the inquiry. She would need more evidence to believe that Mark drank—for instance, the smell of alcohol on his breathe, his testimony, his drunkenly falling about the room. She needs *something* more here than the evidence that she has. It is not that Maria is wrong about her evaluation of Mark that wrongs him, rather it is her inappropriate formation of belief. My account is superior to the false belief account of doxastic wronging since it can explain the true belief version of *Wounded by Belief*.⁷

My “hasty belief formation” account of doxastic wrongings is also superior to the false belief account because, I believe, it intuitively captures what is wrong with this case. Following Basu and Schroeder (2019), Maria’s belief undermines Mark’s accomplishment in this case, and that does wrong him, but rather it is her hasty belief formation process. My account is more intuitive because it puts the wronging upstream, where it is clearer that we have some choices in the matter. Maria has wronged Mark—not because of the contents of the belief—but because she rushed to the

⁶ Basu (2019), we will see momentarily, argues that even true beliefs can amount to doxastic wrongings. Needless to say this view runs into trouble. My point is that my account can make sense of the true belief case without running into the problems that Basu’s account of true belief wronging runs into.

⁷ Objection/concern from Sandy.

Ok, what of this case: she does further inquiry, and finds further evidence to support the belief that Mark is off the wagon. Unbeknownst to her, though, the additional evidence is all misleading. Then it seem that (1) your right-to-inquiry condition is satisfied, but still (2) Mark would continue to feel wounded. If this is right, you haven’t diagnosed whatever it is that is driving proponents of the doctrine of doxastic wronging.

conclusion that Mark falls off the wagon, against Mark's interests. It is clearer to me that she has *done* something wrong here, rather than merely believed something wrong.

Schroeder also mentions a gold medalist who believes that he merely lucked out in winning his event, as well as a father that does not believe that his daughter will do well in engineering school. Both of these cases are instances of false diminishment.

I think there are issues with these cases too, but it is really because we have an interest in being seen as making a contribution. Consider well-justified false diminishments. Suppose the gold medalist won, in part, because another competitor tripped as he was nearing the end of the race. This is a reasonable belief to hold, but suppose that, in fact, this is false. And suppose that the daughter's math scores were poor during grade school, and that she consistently complains about how hard her program is. In such cases, these beliefs are, I think, well justified enough not to be doxastic wrongings, even though they are technically false diminishments. According to the degree of inquiry right, these may not be doxastic wrongings. This is because, even though they are false, they may meet a sufficient threshold of evidence to merit belief formation without wrongdoing.

3.2 Against the True Belief Account

We have seen a shortcoming of Basu and Schroeder's (2019) and Schroeder's (2018) false belief accounts of doxastic wrongdoing, but what about a true belief version of doxastic wrongdoing? Basu (2019) argues that both false and true beliefs can wrong, and beliefs that run *no* risk of affecting the person believed about can amount to a doxastic wrongdoing. In this section, I'll address how the degree of inquiry right handles racist beliefs (and even true racist beliefs). Consider a case that highlights both features:

The Racist Hermit: Suppose a racist hermit in the woods discovers trash containing an alumni newsletter from Sanjeev's university, which includes Sanjeev's photo. The hermit immediately concludes that the pictured person—Sanjeev—smells of curry. Suppose also that Sanjeev happens to have recently made curry, so in this instance the hermit's belief is true—Sanjeev does smell of curry. Has the hermit wronged Sanjeev? (Basu 2019, 919)

Basu thinks that there is something wrong in this case. It cannot be that the hermit would act on his belief that Sanjeev smells of curry, nor will he ever contribute to any racist structures given his isolation. If there's no downstream risk of the hermit's belief, why does it feel so wrong? Basu thinks that the contents of the hermit's belief wrong Sanjeev, even though there is no risk of the hermit expressing his belief to Sanjeev or contributing to racist structures.

The Racist Hermit poses challenges to my account. I argue, however, that even though the rights-based view of doxastic wrongdoing cannot make sense of *The Racist Hermit*, it can make sense of cases sufficiently like it. Let's think through a slightly modified version of the case that has both the distance feature and the true belief feature of Basu's *Racist Hermit*:

The Racist Construction Worker: Suppose a racist construction worker on a job site discovers trash containing an alumni newsletter from Sanjeev's university, which includes Sanjeev's photo. The construction worker 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 construction worker's belief is true—Sanjeev does smell of curry. Has the construction worker wronged Sanjeev?

Let's stipulate that Sanjeev will likely never meet this construction worker, but (unlike the hermit) the construction worker will be involved in society. I think that the issue with *The Racist Construction*

Worker is belief formation process. There is a wronging, but the wronging is not necessarily the content of the belief; rather it is the fact that the construction worker hastily closes inquiry on a belief that is sufficiently in Sanjeev's interest. But what is the interest?

Sanjeev has a strong interest against beliefs like the construction worker's not because the construction worker himself will harm or affect Sanjeev but because beliefs like the construction worker's make Sanjeev's social group worse off. Sanjeev's interest in the well-being of his social group generates, I believe, an obligation for the hermit not to form a belief *about Sanjeev*. Thus, one of the interests for a more thorough degree of inquiry is the belief's contribution to structural norms of racism. Insofar as I have an interest against systemic stigma of my group, I have a right against others to pursue higher degrees of evidence and not close inquiry too quickly or on too weak of evidence—for beliefs *about me*! If I adopt my own group's interest as my own interest, others must pursue more evidence before forming potential racist beliefs about me.

Up until now, my account has lacked an explanation for the wrongness of racist beliefs: racist belief could only be explained if they undermined relationships or reputations. However, I have identified a separate interest at stake: the interest in the well-being of one's social group. This interest generates the degree of inquiry right *for beliefs that are specific to an individual*.

Basu's account, moreover, struggles with the context sensitivity of the contents of belief, i.e., some racist beliefs. Recall the context sensitivity of my account. Think about the content of the hermit's and the construction worker's belief: *Sanjeev smells of curry*. In the context of these cases, the belief is racist. However, there may be contexts where this is not a racist belief. Imagine that the hermit and the construction worker are guests at Sanjeev's house for dinner. Sanjeev makes curry for supper and then mentions that he spilled some on his shirt. The hermit could form the belief—*Sanjeev smells of curry*—without prompting any moral issue. I think my account explains these differing contexts. The hermit has met a sufficient degree of evidential support for the belief in question. He thereby appreciates Sanjeev's right to a certain level of inquiry. Basu's account, I think, cannot easily explain why the hermit's belief is problematic in the case without also admitting it is problematic in the dinner case too. It must be the belief formation process in conjunction with the context-sensitive interests at stake that explain the hermit's wronging.

Now to *The Racist Hermit* case. This case poses a challenge to my account: the hermit will never contribute to any racist structures that affect Sanjeev or members of his social group. Given that the hermit's belief does not pose any risks against relevant interests, it seems to me that there's nothing wrong with his belief, according to my account. The hermit may be blameworthy for his belief formation procedure—e.g., he may be blamed for his hasty epistemic generalization or the fact that in other contexts his belief would undermine Sanjeev's interests—but he is not blameworthy as a matter of undermining Sanjeev's degree of inquiry right. Thus, the hermit does not, according to my account, doxastically wrong Sanjeev.

Is this a problem for my account of doxastic wronging? I do not think so. With *The Racist Construction Worker*, I have shown how true belief and beliefs formed from far away can undermine our interests. The hermit, as an isolated person, does not stand in a position to harm anyone else; there is no interest at stake with his belief. But so long as the racist believer is not a hermit, i.e., participating in society to *any degree* at all, then we can hold them responsible for a rights violation. Moreover, we can point to other wronging-making features of the hermit's belief—both moral and epistemic—to explain the hermit's wrongdoing independently of doxastic wronging. Given that my account will capture any *non-hermit* epistemic activity and that it is compatible with other wrong-making features, I find this blemish does not give us good reason to reject the rights-based account of doxastic wronging.

My analysis of *The Racist Construction Worker* and *The Racist Hermit* brings out two features of my account of degree of inquiry. First, the scope of relevant interests is broader than we might have

thought. One's concern about the well-being of one's group generates an interest. This interest, if I am right, is strong enough to pose the degree of inquiry right against others. When I haphazardly form beliefs about Sanjeev that undermine his interests in his social group, I've violated his right and thereby wronged him. Secondly, the degree of inquiry right can be violated from any distance, regardless of whether there is any risk that the belief will affect the person believed about, so long as the belief will contribute to racist structures.

Consider now a modified version of *Wounded by Belief*. In this case, we have a true belief that, I'll argue, wrongs.

Wounded by Disbelief: Sarah is on a third date with Jimmy. Jimmy seems to be a really interesting, genuine person. Jimmy, however, has odd beliefs. With a straight face, he abruptly tells Sarah of all of the strange conspiracy theories that he believes. It is his life's mission to stop the committee of time travelers bent on tormenting the greater tri-county area. Sarah finds it increasingly difficult to take such beliefs seriously: revealing a face of disbelief. And Jimmy can tell. Jimmy feels wronged by Sarah's disbelief. Has Sarah wronged Jimmy by not believing his conspiracies? Should Sarah apologize to Jimmy?⁸

This is an instance of doxastic wronging, according to Basu's true belief account. Why is there a wronging? Following Strawson and Andre Lorde, Basu suggests that feelings like resentment are "good indicators that some moral demand has not been met" (922). Jimmy's hurt feelings may reveal that some apology is due. To further see this, consider Basu's explanation of why it is wrong to mistake "a white man at a Beyonce concert for a staff member rather than a concert-goer" (924). She argues that, in this case, you would fail to see the concert-goer as he sees himself, and you would "observe him in the way a scientist observes the planets" (924). Similarly, when Sarah disbelieves Jimmy, she fails to identify Jimmy as he sees himself—a hero bent on stopping time travelers—and so she relates to him as a scientist might observe planets. This would, according to the account, wrong Jimmy.

This wronging is directed. Sarah's belief is likely something as follows: *Jimmy is wrong about these conspiracy theories*. The belief itself and its content, it seems, is what hurts Jimmy's feelings. Moreover, Sarah's belief is clearly true since Jimmy's beliefs are ludicrous. If this assessment is correct, then this account gets the wrong verdict in this case. It strongly seems as though Sarah should not believe Jimmy's strange beliefs: an implausible conclusion. Basu does not have any explanation as to why there is no wronging in this case. Without further explanation, Basu's true view is too weak.

The degree of inquiry right sidesteps a wronging in this case. According to the degree of inquiry right, we leave inquiry open for beliefs that matter for those believed about. However, we can close inquiry once we reach a high credence. Sarah, though, has reached this high degree of credence that Jimmy's views are false since Jimmy's beliefs are *so* far-fetched. Sarah can close inquiry without violating Jimmy's rights or wronging him. More specifically, she is in a strong enough epistemic position to answer Jimmy's most "reasonable" objections.

⁸ Sandy: It is? I am not sure I see that it has to be. Rather: if it does, then Basu's view is much more problematic than I realized. Since we would then be able to construct cases in which I have excellent evidence that p, but when you (my friend) tell me that not-p, I will doxastically wrong you by not believing you. This seems incredible to me (in the literal sense that the theory is not believable to me). Is that really what Basu is committed to? You might want to provide textual evidence for this. All you cite is her quote that feelings are "good indications" that a moral demand hasn't been met, but "good indications" are not "proofs", so she has wiggle room here.

Lastly, I want to note how Schroeder argues that his false belief account of doxastic wrongdoing can account for some true beliefs. Schroeder distinguishes between objectively and subjectively wrong beliefs.

Simpler explanation: Inquiry matters. Some beliefs that are true, require a more thorough degree of inquiry. Simpler than the subjective evaluation account.

3.3 Against the Strawsonian Account

I want to entertain one more account of doxastic wrongdoing: The Strawsonian Account of Doxastic Wronging. P.F. Strawson (1962) argues that we can view each other in at least two ways: the objective stance and the participant stance. According to the objective stance, we view others as objects to be “managed or handled,” much like a scientist may view the object of her study. It is typically wrong to view people like this. According to Basu (2019) and Marusic and White (2018), any belief that wrongs takes up the objective stance. Maria, for instance, wrongs Mark insofar as she views him as the object of study, rather than an autonomous person.

In support of this position, Basu (2019a) turns to Langston (1992):

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. (486)

Marusic and White (2018) write:

Doxastic wrongdoing 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 wrongdoing is not fundamentally different from other kinds of wrongdoing. (110)

Marusic and White are primarily interested in believing others’ testimony and taking their views as serious evidence for the truth.⁹ However, Basu elaborates that to form negative beliefs about others often involves taking on the objective stance. Like Sherlock Holmes, we adopt problematic belief formation practices that ultimately insult the other person and treat them as an object.

⁹ Consider an objection to my account: It is too narrow in scope. It does not some fundamental cases of doxastic wrongdoing. For instance, consider Fricker’s epistemic injustice. According to Fricker, we wrong one another by not taking one another seriously as testifiers. Thus, doxastic wrongings are broader than merely holding beliefs about others; they also involves the attitudes we hold toward one another as a source of the truth. Fricker and Marusic and White cite *The Talented Mr. Ripley* as a case.

The issue here is X’s attitude toward Y’s as a source of evidence.

Two responses: There is a wrongdoing that occurs here; however, it is something different than a doxastic wrongdoing. There is not anything at the belief itself per se that drives X’s wrongdoing Y.??

Or secondly, we might think that X really does doxastically wrong Y. My account can make sense of this. The issue, then, is that X has not done a thorough enough investigation before forming the belief that Y is not a reliable source of testimony. Thus, the belief that Y is no good source of testimony, when under investigated, amounts to a doxastic wrongdoing, while the attitudes that follow from that belief are different sorts of wrongings.

Basu, Marusic, and White admit, however, that it is not always wrong to view other people from the objective stance. We might imagine a surgeon viewing a patient as the object of study during surgery. This does not seem wrong. James Fritz and Elizabeth Jackson (2021) note that: Basu, Marusic, and White “do not attempt to explain precisely *when* it’s problematic to take up the objective stance” (1390). My account of doxastic wronging provides a plausible answer to this question: it is wrong to assume the objective stance toward others when it is in violation of the degree of inquiry right. That is, it is wrong to observe other people as the object of study when it undermines their interests in the relevant sorts of ways I’ve mentioned above.

Basu, Marusic, and White, therefore, may be correct that all doxastic wrongings involve taking the objective stance toward others. I do not think this is right. I think what is really going on is that the beliefs they discuss undermine our interests. The central wrong-making feature is not some instance of the objective stance but rather it is a rights violation. This suggestion needs to be fleshed out in more detail but that lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Let me highlight one more strength of my account over the dominant view. One of the hurdles over which doxastic wronging proponents often must vault is doxastic voluntarism. Doxastic voluntarism is the view that we exhibit some degree of control over what we believe. But doxastic voluntarism has problems, for I cannot simply make myself believe that it is raining outside when it isn’t.¹⁰ Many object to voluntarism on the grounds that we have no or sufficiently little control over what we believe, and that if we have no control over our beliefs then beliefs cannot be the kind of thing that wrongs. There’s much more to be said here than I have the space for, and Basu and Schroeder (2019) have offered substantive responses. My point is that the degree of inquiry right can sidestep this entire problem altogether. Since it is uncontroversial that we can choose when and whether to open inquiry, it is also uncontroversial when we close inquiry as well. Thus, even if we have no control over belief, we can still make sense of these cases on my account.

My account of the degree of inquiry right, I have argued, explains touchstone cases from the literature without the “baggage” that the dominant explanations carry with them. Before continuing, note that my account is an upstream version of doxastic wronging. Beliefs do wrong, but not necessarily the beliefs themselves, but rather the fact that inquiry is prematurely closed against another person’s interests. This feature, I have argued, shows my account holds up in shifting, morally non-problematic contexts, which is a strength of the account. So, who cares whether the belief itself wrongs? What matters is that we can explain the intuitive wrongings done in these cases, which I have done.

As a last and tentative note, consider Schroeder’s *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.”

Basu notes that sometimes treating someone as a person is perfectly compatible with treating them as a thing (930). Given this feature of the Strawsonian account, Basu admits that “perhaps...there are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions we can state for when beliefs wrong” (930). In response, I believe that my interest-based account gives us a sharper, though not yet complete, picture of when beliefs wrong. Violating another person’s degree of inquiry right, this account goes, is sufficient for a belief that wrongs.

Before continuing, I want to highlight one last strength of my account: It captures Basu’s (2019b) intuitions about the “rational racist.”

¹⁰ Alston (1985, 1988); Audi (2013) [Cite more stuff]

The Supposedly Rational Racist. You shouldn't have done it. But you did. You scrolled down to the comments section of an article concerning the state of race relations in America, and you are now reading the comments. The comments on such articles tend to be predictable, but there is one comment that catches your eye. Amongst the slurs, the get-rich-quick schemes, and the threats of physical violence, there is the following comment: "Although it might be 'unpopular' or 'politically incorrect' to say this, I'm tired of constantly being called a racist whenever I believe of a black diner in my section that they will tip worse than the white diners in my section." The user posting the comment, Spencer, argues that the facts don't lie, and he helpfully reproduces those facts. For example, he links to studies that show that on average black diners tip substantially less than white diners. The facts, he insists, aren't racist. If you were to deny his claims and were to believe otherwise, it would be you who is engaging in wishful thinking. It would be you who believes against the evidence. It would be you, not Spencer, who is epistemically irrational. (Basu 2019b, 2498)

Basu thinks that this is an example of a racist who, through objective research, comes to form a justified, true belief that Blacks tip less than Whites. For the sake of argument, let's assume that the rational racist forms true beliefs that are the result of "cool rationality" rather than "hot irrationality," i.e., they do not form racist beliefs on the basis of ill-will. But Basu thinks, rightly I believe, that *something* goes awry with the rational racist. My account of interests in the wellbeing of their social group captures this, while also leaving open the possibility of forming the belief (after a sufficient inquiry). Moreover, my account leaves open the possibility that true beliefs can wrong others. It is only after a thorough inquiry—an inquiry that tracks the stakes of the belief in question—that we can form a belief that undermines another's interests. Thus, Spencer's belief *could* be morally permissible, but only after a good faith inquiry endeavor.

I have already identified a number of interests we have in what they believe about us, even if we never found out about those beliefs. But, following Basu, we might think that "the world is an unjust place and there may be many morally objectionable beliefs that it justifies" (2512). In light of this fact, I think we have good reasons to use caution when forming beliefs about others. But certain beliefs should not be completely off limits. What we owe to others is an extensive, good-faith investigation when forming beliefs about one another. I now move to objections to my account.

IV. Objections

Consider an objection: First, recall that I said that the degree of inquiry right applied to costly beliefs. Let's call costly beliefs that are also formed too quickly *rash beliefs*. Recall that I have argued that reputation and relationships are a strong enough interest for us to generate the degree of inquiry right and thereby avoid rash beliefs. But perhaps this move is misguided. Why think that the wronging-making feature of rash beliefs is a rights violation? David Oderberg (2013) argues that rash beliefs violate a general moral obligation to be charitable. Oderberg argues that the moral obligations of charity involve benevolent interpretation of character evidence, as well as the degree of inquiry claim I have argued for. So why prefer my explanation over Oderberg's charity explanation?

Consider a brief response: a general moral obligation to charity is too demanding. Charity strikes me as something above and beyond moral duty. If there were general duties to charity, then why not think that they would persistently demand we make the world better, an objection also posed against utilitarianism? Secondly, even if there is a general obligation to charity, it still does not follow that one needs to undertake Oderberg's epistemic tasks. What matters for charity is treatment of the other person and not necessarily what we believe about them. A charitable person, I think,

could believe that another person did something wrong but could nevertheless still act charitably toward (perhaps more charitably since this person does not likely deserve charitable treatment).

I have hitherto neglected the question of whether an interest in reputation, relationships, and the well-being of my group are strong enough to merit a right. An objector may, therefore, point this out as a weakness of my account. After all, one million dollars is a fine thing and may be in my interest to acquire. But that interest does not generate a right that forces other people to give me enough money to meet my financial goals. Reputation, relationships, and interests in my social group's well-being may be of the same sort.

In response, consider libel and slander. We commonly recognize duties to care for others' reputations in various contexts. It is generally considered wrong to disseminate false information with the intention of desecrating another's reputation or straining their relationships. If I spread a false rumor that another faculty member has gotten a DUI in the past, then I am clearly doing something wrong. One plausible explanation of the wrongness in this case is that I undermine the student's interests in a decent reputation. It, therefore, seems plausible to think that we have an interest in maintaining a good reputation, and perhaps that I have violated his right to a decent reputation among and relationship with his peers. Thus, an interest in reputation and relationships strongly seem to generate various rights.

Consider a separate but related issue: By withholding money from me, other people seem to undermine my interests, but this interest undermining does not seem wrong. This raises a question: What kinds of "interest undermining" violate one's rights? And what kinds of interest undermining are morally permissible?

For an answer to this question, let us return to Raz. One of the conditions of having a right is that "an aspect of x's well-being (his interest) *is a sufficient reason* for holding other person(s) to be under a duty" (195, my emphasis). Raz argues that what makes an interest a "sufficient reason" for establishing a right may vary with one's moral theory. However, he argues that an interest is sufficient so long as one can provide an argument showing (1) that a rights-holder has an interest in x; (2) that the interest in x is important enough to generate a duty for others; and (3) that there are no contrary considerations—e.g., the rights-holder's interest in x violates other people's interests. Raz does not define precisely what makes an interest sufficiently important to generate a duty, but we might think that an interest is important if violating it ends my life, significantly disrupts the trajectory of my life, or causes me some serious inconvenience or harm. Thus, to return to the objection, even though withholding money from me may violate my interest in making a million dollars, Raz might say that either my interest is not important enough to generate a duty for others or that there are contrary considerations, e.g., other people's interest in keeping their own money. Note that a violation of one's relationships and reputation could interrupt my life or constitute a serious inconvenience.

Consider one more objection: My proposal implies that we should not believe victims of sexual assault and rape. Let me explain. When a victim tells me that she has been assaulted, her testimony opens inquiry for me, in a manner similar to the cases I've mentioned above. I have a choice of closing the inquiry and forming belief or leaving inquiry open and withholding belief. Now, forming the belief endangers the assaulter's reputation and my relationship with this person, assuming I know them. The stakes, therefore, are sufficiently high for the assaulter such as to generate the degree of inquiry right. However, this implication seems problematic because there is rarely further evidence of a sexual assault apart from the testimony of the victim. To demand further inquiry, consequently, will often lead to permanently withholding belief and so not believing the victim. This case brings out a kind of theoretical weakness in my account.

I have three avenues of response here. First, in a situation like this, we have a clashing of two sets of interests: the victim's interest in being believed and the assaulter's interest in reputation and

relationships. My account is consistent with the possibility that the victim's interests can override the assaulter's interest, thereby overriding the degree of inquiry right for the assaulter. I'm less interested in this response because it may reveal that the degree of inquiry right is easily overridable and, therefore, too weak to be of any real moral significance.

Secondly, recall that according to Raz's account of rights an interest generates a right only if there are no contrary considerations. In situations like this, we might think that degree of inquiry right does not obtain for the accused, as there is a clear conflict of interests happening in this context. Thus, we can believe the victim's testimony without violating the accused degree of inquiry right.

Lastly, recall that I argued that some initial evidence merits sufficiently high credence such as to meet the degree of inquiry right. I modified the faculty member DUI case—the video with the faculty member admitting he is too drunk to drive—to capture this feature of my account. It may be that the victim's testimony is like the faculty member on video: her testimony conveys sufficient credence such as to meet the standard of justification for the degree of inquiry right. This is an elegant response because it requires no theoretical modification of the right. Moreover, I do not endorse this response. I merely call attention here that my account can handle this difficult case.

At this point, I must say more about conflicting considerations. There's a plethora of contrary considerations that must be weighed against one another. For instance, my crooked financier might have a deep interest in being seen as a good guy. Does this mean that I owe it to him to do further investigation when I suspect he's burning my money away? If my account says that I must pursue further evidence in this case, then this is a problem.

Consider, moreover, a case about inquiry "trade-off." The idea here is that my account cannot plausibly handle instances of inquiry trade-off. Instead of understanding doxastic wrongdoing in terms of rights, perhaps we merely have moral reasons to inquire more about each other when our interests are at stake. This case may pose a problem for my account of the degree of inquiry right.

Oncologist: Sam is a renown surgical oncologist. When he is not meeting with patients or performing surgeries, he is reading the latest studies and journal in his field. Keeping up with the research better helps him perform life-saving tasks. It's clear that nearly all his epistemic space is occupied with research relevant to oncology. Suppose that at the end of a long surgery Sam overhears gossip that a new resident in the hospital, James, slept with one of the other residents. Sam, exhausted from his day, forms the belief that James slept with the other resident.¹¹

Given Sam's limited—and vitally important—epistemic resources, it seems as though he's got overriding reasons not to go about investigating whether James has slept with the other resident. However, if believing this involves violating James's degree of inquiry right, then it might be wrong of Sam not to seek out more evidence. But this does not seem plausible. A better explanation here, the objection goes, is that we have mere moral reasons to inquire about others, moral reasons that do not amount to moral rights. If this is right, then Sam has an overriding reason not to inquire more, where on the rights view it is not as clear that he does have an overriding reason.¹²

¹¹ Charles: Make this a forced, low-stakes case.

¹² In the full draft of this chapter, I plan to address an alternative view to the degree of inquiry right. According to this view, our interest in reputation and relationships do not generate rights; rather, they generate *prima facie* moral reasons that are (perhaps easily) overridable. One strength of this view is that it can easily explain why there's nothing wrong in

As a tentative response, I contend that rights can conflict with other duties. This shows that, sometimes, the duties following from the degree of inquiry right might be defeated by some other duty, e.g., the doctor's duty to his patients. One reason to think this is that patients have a stronger interest in having a doctor who is up to date on the most cutting-edge literature than I have in having a solid reputation. Moreover, I have a stronger interest in keeping my finances than my crooked financier has in his reputation. By *stronger interest* I mean that a greater degree of my well-being rides on the interest. For instance, my interest in not dying is greater than my interest in friendship because dying undermines my wellbeing much more than, say, losing a friend. Thus, our interests in reputation and relationships—the interests I'm arguing ground the degree of inquiry right—compete against a number of other (stronger and weaker) interests.¹³

I have already argued, however, that the degree of inquiry right is weak, i.e., overridden by other relevant interests. Following Wenar (1998), the right has contours, where other considerations—stronger interests, outcomes, etc.—make violating the right permissible. The oncologist case, I think, is an example just this, other considerations overriding the right.

V. Conclusion

This paper has argued for a conception of the connection between moral and epistemic norms. I have argued that we owe it to one another—as a matter of moral rights—to inquire more when a belief would undermine the interests of another person. The interests at stake—reputation, relationships, and the well-being of our social group—render some beliefs with a higher standard of justification than they otherwise would have. This is a rights-based account of doxastic wrongdoing.

This proposal threatens the dominant views of doxastic wrongdoing in the literature. We have seen that the degree of inquiry right avoids problems that these proposals face. For instance, true beliefs can wrong, but we need not deny that we can form them. My view can make sense of the touchstone cases in the literature without the philosophical baggage, for example, of doxastic voluntarism.

I want to gesture at one last idea to close. Theorists argue that moral encroachment—the view that positive epistemic status is contingent upon the moral features of the belief—follows from doxastic wrongdoing. Beliefs that wrong, according to these authors, must undergo more rigorous epistemic investigation. The degree of inquiry right can also generate an account of moral encroachment. I have argued that when a belief undermines an interest, then an agent should not close inquiry without a cost appropriate investigation. I think we can tell a similar story about how epistemic status can bend to these relevant interests, making beliefs that violate this right harder to justify epistemically. So long as beliefs that are morally problematic undermine another's interests, then it may follow that moral encroachment can obtain.

Oncologist. In response to this position, I'll argue that *prima facie* moral reasons will ultimately be too weak, and instead we need a relatively weak, overridable right to a certain degree of inquiry.

This view allows us to distinguish between two kinds of doxastic phenomena: doxastic wrongings and doxastic misbehaviors. For instance, Sam from *Oncologist* might be doing a doxastic misbehavior, rather than a wrongdoing, in virtue of forming the belief that his residents are sleeping together. What would be a wrongdoing in other circumstances is merely a misbehavior because of his limited epistemic capacities.

¹³ Appealing to strength of interests here will still run into objections. How strong an interest is will not always be a determining factor for whether we have a right. Consider, for instance, a general who at a moment's notice can command a person to likely die. This is an appropriate use of his power. This general, however, cannot command that a person have sex with him. The soldier likely has a stronger interest in not dying than he does in not having sex with the general; however, the former is appropriate, where the latter is not. Thus, rights do not necessarily track strength. I do not yet have a response to this concern.

In the next chapter, I argue for a novel concept in the encroachment literature: meaningfulness encroachment. According to meaningfulness encroachment when the meaningfulness of an agent's life is at stake, the epistemic standards for justification become more demanding. This chapter presents, primarily, a negative argument against a certain recipe for moral encroachment, i.e., accounts that appeal to a *No Conflicts* principle. I argue that such accounts of moral encroachment fall prey to analogous arguments for meaningfulness encroachment. These arguments, however, are counterintuitive. I argue that my contextualist account of encroachment can make better sense of meaningfulness encroachment. In the end, meaningfulness encroachment is a plausible concept, so long as we ignore *No Conflicts* recipes for encroachment and opt for a contextualist account of encroachment.

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