Belief, Blame, and Inquiry: A Defense of Doxastic Wronging

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Forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies.*

Penultimate draft. Please cite published version if possible.

Abstract: According to the thesis of doxastic wronging, our beliefs can non-derivatively wrong others. A recent criticism of this view claims that proponents of the doxastic wronging thesis have no principled grounds for denying that credences can likewise non-derivatively wrong, so they must countenance pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality. This paper defends the thesis of doxastic wronging from this objection by arguing that belief bears distinctive relationships to inquiry and blame that can explain why beliefs, but not credences, can non-derivatively wrong. First, forming a belief (but not updating one's credence) closes inquiry, and suspending judgment (but not updating one's credence) opens inquiry. Consequently, beliefs can distinctively wrong others by prematurely closing inquiry or inappropriately opening inquiry. Second, beliefs (but not credences) can constitute blame. Unfittingly blaming someone can wrong them, and hence beliefs which constitute unfitting blame can distinctively wrong. In addition to defending the claim that only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong, this paper gestures towards an ethics of belief which attends to the relationship between belief and attitudes such as inquiry, faith, trust, and blame.

1. Introduction

According to the thesis of "doxastic wronging," we can non-derivatively wrong others solely in virtue of what we believe about them. While its proponents claim that the thesis of doxastic wronging captures an important feature of the phenomenology of our interpersonal relationships, critics argue that accepting it has worrisome consequences. One such criticism—developed in two recent papers, one by James Fritz and Elizabeth Jackson (2021) and another by David Enoch and Levi Spectre (forthcoming)—is that proponents of the thesis of doxastic wronging have no principled grounds for denying that credences (i.e., degrees of belief) can likewise non-derivatively wrong. And if credences can non-derivatively wrong, then there are pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality.

In this paper, I argue that belief, but not credence, bears relationships to inquiry and blame that can explain why believing a proposition that reflects poorly on someone differs in morally significant ways from having a high credence in a proposition that reflects poorly on someone. I thereby aim both to defend the claim that beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong[1] and to begin to develop an ethics of belief which attends to the relationship between belief and attitudes such as inquiry, faith, trust, and blame.

Here is an outline of what follows. In §2, I introduce the thesis of doxastic wronging and elaborate on the objection that accepting doxastic wronging generates significant pressure to accept the worrisome claim that credences can likewise non-derivatively wrong. In §3, I argue that beliefs (but not credences) can wrong by prematurely closing inquiry, and that inappropriately opening inquiry and thereby suspending judgment can wrong in virtue of constituting a lack of faith or trust. In §4, I argue that beliefs bear a distinctive relationship to blame that credences do not—either licensing or (partly or fully) constituting blame—which also explains how beliefs can uniquely non-derivatively wrong. §5 concludes.

2. Doxastic Wronging and its Critics

2.1 Doxastic Wronging

The term "doxastic wronging" was coined by Basu and Schroeder (2019) to express the idea that our beliefs can wrong others. The primary motivation for the claim that beliefs can wrong comes from the intuitions elicited by cases like the following:

> **Wine Stain**: Suppose that you have struggled with an alcohol problem for many years, but have been sober for eight months. Tonight you attend a departmental reception for a visiting colloquium speaker, and are proud of withstanding the temptation to have a drink. But when you get home, your spouse smells the wine that the colloquium speaker spilled on your sleeve

[1] As will become clear in §§3-4, I am not defending Basu's and Schroeder's accounts of doxastic wronging in their entirety. Rather, I am defending the narrower claim that beliefs can non-derivatively wrong.

> while gesticulating to make a point, and you can see from her eyes that she thinks you have fallen off of the wagon. (2019: 182)

You are likely to feel wounded by your spouse's belief, Basu and Schroeder suggest, and you may feel that you are owed an apology (2019: 182). They take this to indicate that your spouse's belief wrongs you.

Moreover, Basu and Schroeder argue, our beliefs can wrong others in ways that are *non-derivative* from either 1) their upstream causes or downstream effects, or 2) the epistemic status they would have independently of their moral status. To defend 1), Basu and Schroeder remark, "It would feel insincere and unsatisfying if [your spouse] apologized for the upstream act of not investigating more carefully before forming this belief, but continued to believe it anyway, or if she apologized for the downstream act of revealing her belief to you by the look in her eyes, but not for the belief itself." (2019: 182). To defend 2), Basu and Schroeder claim that your spouse's belief wrongs you despite the fact that her evidence supports having a reasonably high credence in the proposition that you drank at the colloquium, such that her evidence would be sufficient to justify belief in the absence of high moral stakes. If your spouse's belief is epistemically unjustified, this is because the moral stakes partially *explain* why her belief is unjustified: namely, by raising the threshold for epistemic justification (according to Basu and Schroeder's account of moral encroachment) (2019: §4).

In solo-authored work, Basu and Schroeder each provides a different explanation of how beliefs wrong. On Schroeder's account of doxastic wronging, a belief wrongs when it *falsely diminishes someone*. In short, a belief diminishes a person if it involves "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" (2018: 124, emphasis Schroeder's). On Basu's account, we wrong others when we fail to render to them what we epistemically owe them, namely "the adoption of a Strawsonian participant or Kantian involved stance: one that requires believers to acknowledge one another as persons and not things" (2019: 925).

Abstracting from the details of their respective accounts, common to both Basu's and Schroeder's explanations is the thought that doxastic wronging consists in a failure to respect other people's individuality, personhood, or agency.[2]

While Basu and Schroeder do not explicitly discuss whether credences can likewise non-derivatively wrong, it would be a serious problem for Basu and Schroeder's view (by their own lights) if credences could do so. Basu and Schroeder emphasize that they do not wish to countenance either *conflicts* between morality and epistemic rationality—in which a doxastic attitude is epistemically required but morally impermissible—or a *lack of coordination* between morality and epistemic rationality—in which a doxastic attitude is epistemically justified but morally impermissible. They write, "It is puzzling how it could be wrong—and in particular, how it could wrong some individual—to believe something about them that satisfies every rational standard required for knowledge" (2019: 197). They argue that an apology for an epistemically rational belief is unwarranted, which they take to show that epistemically rational beliefs cannot wrong (2019: 198).[3]

Basu and Schroeder appeal to moral encroachment—according to which the moral stakes affect the threshold for how much evidence is necessary to justify belief—to avoid countenancing either conflicts or a lack of coordination between epistemic rationality and morality (2019: §4).[4] If the actual or potential moral costs of a belief—e.g., the risk of doxastic wronging—raise the threshold for epistemic justification, this can *explain* how your spouse's belief that you drank at the colloquium is

[2] Marušić and White (2018 and Fabre (2022) endorse similar explanations of doxastic wronging.
[3] See Basu (2020) for further defense of the claim that moral and epistemic norms cannot conflict, and Schroeder (2021: chapter 9) for further defense of the claim that moral and epistemic norms must be coordinated.
[4] Following Nelson (2010), Basu and Schroeder argue that we are rarely (perhaps never) epistemically *required* to believe any particular proposition (even after considering whether that proposition is true). This claim enables them to avoid conflict between the moral norms and epistemic norms governing belief. (While it does not guarantee *coordination* between moral and epistemic norms, Basu and Schroeder appeal to moral encroachment to secure coordination.) However, this approach is less promising as a way to avoid conflicts between the moral norms and the epistemic norms governing credences. For example, in **Wine Stain** it is very plausible that, in light of the strong evidence your spouse has for the proposition that you drank at the colloquium, she is epistemically required to have a high credence in this proposition (at least after she has considered whether you drank at the colloquium). Having a high credence may be required even if (as credal permissivists, such as Johnson King and Babic 2020, claim) there is not a unique credence that she is epistemically required to adopt.

epistemically irrational despite its having strong evidential support. Because moral encroachment claims that moral considerations *affect* whether a belief is epistemically rational, it ensures that there won't be any conflicts and that there will be coordination between morality and epistemic rationality.

However, moral encroachment on credences is far less plausible because there is no analogous threshold for epistemically justified credences which could be affected by moral considerations.[5] Rather, epistemic rationality plausibly simply requires that one's credence in *p* be proportioned to the degree to which one's evidence supports *p*. The only way in which morality could affect what credence one ought to have is by requiring one to adopt a *different* credence than the credence one is epistemically required to have. Since there is no threshold for justified credence on which morality can encroach, Basu and Schroeder cannot appeal to moral encroachment to guarantee either coordination or a lack of conflict between the moral norms and the epistemic norms governing credences.

In the absence of an alternative explanation of how the epistemic norms governing credences could be affected by morality (or why the epistemic and morals norms governing credences would *happen* to always coincide), the claim that credences can non-derivatively wrong troublingly implies that there can be conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality. So, if Basu's and Schroeder's accounts of doxastic wronging were to imply that credences can also non-derivatively wrong, by their own lights this would constitute a serious problem for their views. (Importantly, though, nothing Basu and Schroeder say rules out the possibility that credences can derivatively wrong *in virtue of* their epistemic irrationality. If the wronging of credences is always *derivative* from their epistemic flaws, then credences can wrong without conflicting with epistemic rationality.)

[5] As both Fritz and Jackson (2021: 1394) and Enoch and Spectre (forthcoming: §2) observe, proponents of pragmatic and moral encroachment typically reject encroachment on epistemically rational credences (with the partial exception of Gao 2019).

2.2 An Objection to Doxastic Wronging

One important recent criticism of the thesis of doxastic wronging—advanced by Enoch and Spectre (forthcoming) and developed especially by Fritz and Jackson (2021)—is that if we accept that beliefs can non-derivatively wrong, we have no principled grounds for denying that credences can likewise non-derivatively wrong.[6] But accepting that credences can non-derivatively wrong has a worrisome implication: that there are pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality.[7] This argument can be formulated as follows:

1) If beliefs can non-derivatively wrong, then credences can non-derivatively wrong.
2) If credences can non-derivatively wrong, then there are pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality.
3) If beliefs can non-derivatively wrong, then there are pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality. (From 1 and 2)
4) There are not pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality.
5) Therefore, beliefs cannot non-derivatively wrong. (From 3 and 4)

Premises 2 and 4 are very plausible. As we saw in §2.1, if epistemically rational credences can non-derivatively wrong, then there can be conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality. And if many of our credences about others are candidates for wronging (when they fail to respect other people's individuality, personhood, or agency), such conflicts will be pervasive. Moreover, granting that there are pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality would be a significant cost of accepting that beliefs can non-derivatively wrong, as Basu and Schroeder (2019: §3), Fritz and

[6] Notably, Enoch and Spectre do not deny that beliefs and credences can *derivatively* wrong (forthcoming: §1).
[7] While Enoch and Spectre's main target is doxastic wronging itself, Fritz and Jackson's main target is "radical" moral encroachment (according to which the moral costs of beliefs *themselves*, independently of their role in guiding action, affect epistemic justification). Here I'm only addressing one step of their argument: the claim that if beliefs can non-derivatively wrong, then credences can non-derivatively wrong.

Jackson (2021: 1406), and Enoch and Spectre (forthcoming: §3.1) all emphasize. Premise 1 is thus the crucial premise which will determine whether this argument succeeds.[8]

Fritz and Jackson defend premise 1 in part by arguing that the intuitions about wronging elicited by cases such as **Wine Stain** extend to credences. If beliefs can wound others and require apologies, so can credences. Fritz and Jackson put the point as follows:

> Imagine telling your wife, after seeing the wine stain, "I'm quite confident you've begun drinking again. I don't full-out believe it, but I think there's a very high probability it is true. While I'm not totally certain, I strongly suspect that you've been behaving in a way that's harmful to yourself and to our relationship." This strikes us as intuitively objectionable—almost as intuitively objectionable as forming a belief in her failure.[9] (2021: 1395-1396)

The purported upshot is that even if credences do not intuitively wrong to the same extent as beliefs, the difference is one of degree rather than one of kind.

Fritz and Jackson proceed to argue that not only do the intuitions elicited by particular cases support premise 1, but so do both Basu's and Schroeder's theoretical accounts of doxastic wronging. As I noted above, the basic idea underlying both Basu's and Schroeder's accounts of doxastic wronging is that beliefs can wrong when they manifest a lack of respect for others' individuality, personhood, or agency. However, Fritz and Jackson argue that credences can manifest the very same lack of respect. It seems like we can both adopt the objective stance towards someone and diminish their positive agential contribution to the world solely in virtue of our credences about them, without forming a committal, outright belief about them. Fritz and Jackson provide the following case to illustrate this point:

> Imagine a character who is generally doxastically cautious. He tends not to take a stand on how the world is in any arena, and his mental pictures of other people are probabilistic through-and-through. But he arrives at those probabilistic pictures through an uncharitable,

[8] This is not to say that premises 2 and 4 are *undeniable*. Johnson King and Babic (2020) reject premise 2 by arguing that morality can determine which inferences (among those which are epistemically permitted) one all-things-considered should make and thus which credence (among those which are epistemically permitted) one all-things-considered should have. (However, while Johnson King and Babic's view avoids *conflicts* between morality and epistemic rationality, it does not secure *coordination*.) And as Fritz and Jackson note (2021: 1404), proponents of the view that credences can wrong can simply bite the bullet and accept that there are pervasive conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality.

[9] Enoch and Spectre make a similar point (forthcoming: §2).

> agency-diminishing set of dispositions. He considers it next to impossible (but not impossible!) for anyone to escape the influence of social forces. As a result, he approaches any given stranger as extremely likely to be a walking, talking racial stereotype. Further, he always takes his information about even his closest friends to strongly (but fallibly!) support the ugliest, most despicable interpretation of their behavior. This character, by stipulation, never takes a stand on what people are like…[Yet] insofar as a mental representation can diminish someone's agency by making it out to be lesser or worse, this character's mental representations do so. (2021: 1398)

Thus, according to Fritz and Jackson, our best accounts of doxastic wronging predict that credences can non-derivatively wrong *for the very same reasons* that beliefs non-derivatively wrong.

2.3 Responding to the Objection

The aim of this paper is to defend doxastic wronging by arguing that we should reject premise 1 of the objection. In §§3-4, I will defend the claim that only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong by arguing that attending to belief's distinctive relationships to inquiry and blame reveals morally significant asymmetries between belief and credence which reflect fundamental differences between belief and credence.[10] On this proposal, beliefs are committal representations which are constitutive of other morally significant attitudes, such as faith, trust, and blame. Credences, by contrast, are non-committal reflections of how strongly we take our evidence to support a proposition, and they are not constitutively related to these other morally significant attitudes. These differences between belief and credence thus *explain* how beliefs that reflect negatively on others can non-derivatively wrong while high credences in propositions which reflect negatively on others cannot non-derivatively wrong.[11]

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[10] Fritz and Jackson consider, and ultimately reject, three candidate asymmetries between beliefs and credences which may promise to explain why only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong: 1) that believing that *p* involves ruling out the possibility of *not-p*, settling the matter, committing oneself, or taking a stand; 2) that we possess control or exert agency with respect to our beliefs that we lack with respect to credences; and 3) that beliefs may be associated with behavioral dispositions and dispositions to form certain mental states (such as judging or occurrently believing) (2021: 1400-1401). My aim is to identify two *different* asymmetries between beliefs and credences which provide more promising explanations of how beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong. (However, one of the asymmetries I appeal to—belief's distinctive relationship to inquiry—may vindicate the first and/or the second asymmetry that Fritz and Jackson reject.)

[11] I won't argue here that these distinctive features of belief extend to other cases of putative doxastic wronging, such as beliefs formed about another person on the basis of merely statistical evidence (Schroeder 2018, Basu 2019, Fabre 2022) or failures to believe testimony (Marušić and White (2018). But parts of my account of why only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong—especially the appeal to belief's distinctive relationship to inquiry, faith, and trust—can arguably be applied to these other types of cases as well.

Moreover, this theoretical account of the asymmetries between belief and credence serves to bolster the *intuitive* case for the claim that credences cannot non-derivatively wrong. Since the concept of a "credence" is (at least somewhat) theory-laden, it is doubtful whether we really have clear pre-theoretical intuitions about whether credences can non-derivatively wrong. I thus aim to show that *in light of* this theoretical account of the morally relevant differences between belief and credence, it is intuitively plausible that only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong.[12]

Before examining these two morally significant asymmetries between belief and credence, though, it's worth observing that the cases which elicit the strongest intuitions that credences can wrong—such as Fritz and Jackson's aforementioned case depicting a character who has uncharitable, agency-diminishing, and racist credences without having outright beliefs—describe agents who seem to have epistemically irrational credences. But in cases depicting agents who seem to have epistemically rational credences, I think that the intuition that their credences wrong disappears (or is at least significantly weakened). (I will defend this claim in §§3-4.) To the extent that it's intuitive that your credence wrongs your spouse in Fritz and Jackson's credal variant of **Wine Stain** (described above), this is because their presentation of the case indicates that your credences reflect an excessive, epistemically irrational degree of suspicion. This suggests that the wronging of credences must be *derivative* from their independent epistemic flaws or the upstream process of reasoning or evidence-gathering that led the agent to form their credences. As I noted in §2.1, accepting that only epistemically irrational credences can wrong doesn't require countenancing conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality. Consequently, proponents of doxastic wronging don't face any pressure on these grounds to reject the view that credences can wrong partly *in virtue of* their epistemic irrationality.[13]

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[12] Thanks to an anonymous referee for prompting me to clarify the structure of my argument.

[13] Of course, not all epistemically irrational credences can wrong. While it goes beyond the scope of this paper to offer a complete account of when epistemically irrational credences can wrong, a *prima facie* plausible view is that credences can

3. Belief and Inquiry

The first morally significant asymmetry between beliefs and credences is that beliefs, but not credences, close inquiry and settle a question. Because reasons to open or close inquiry are reasons for or against suspending judgment, moral considerations can affect what we ought to believe without affecting the credence we ought to have.

3.1 Wronging by Closing Inquiry

The argument in this section draws on Jane Friedman's work on inquiry, belief, and suspension of judgment, so I'll start by briefly sketching Friedman's account of their relationship. Friedman argues that inquiry should be construed not as an action but as a goal-directed attitude which has "the aim of resolving some issue or matter, of trying to figure something out" (2019: 298). More precisely, inquirers want to know the answer to the question about which they are inquiring. Friedman thus claims that someone inquiring at time *t* has an *interrogative attitude* (abbreviated IA)—such as curiosity, wondering, contemplation, or deliberation—towards the question about which they are inquiring at *t*.

On Friedman's view, inquiry and the IAs are constitutively related to outright doxastic attitudes (belief and suspension of judgment) but not constitutively related to credences. Friedman (2017) argues that suspending judgment about a question entails inquiring about (and having an IA towards) that question, and inquiring about (and having an IA towards) a question entails suspending judgment about that question. Correspondingly, on one plausible specification of Friedman's view, belief is a mental state that closes inquiry.[14] By believing a complete answer to the question about

wrong partly in virtue of their epistemic irrationality when their epistemic irrationality is *caused by* morally objectionable attitudes (e.g., ill will, disrespect, or prejudice). Cf. Miranda Fricker's account of testimonial injustice, on which a credence attributing to someone a credibility deficit can wrong them when this credence is epistemically irrational because of prejudice (2007: §1.3).

[14] Friedman's (2019) official view seems to be that while suspending judgment *metaphysically* or *descriptively* entails inquiring, belief is *normatively* incompatible with inquiring (such that it *rationally commits* one to closing inquiry). However, Friedman elsewhere seems sympathetic to the view that it is psychologically possible for a subject to be mentally "fragmented" or "compartmentalized" such that relative to one fragment the subject has closed inquiry and believes *p,* while relative to a different fragment the subject continues to inquire and thus suspends judgment on *p* (2017: n8). A

which one is inquiring, one "settles" the question.[15] As Friedman notes, this account of the relationship between belief and inquiry implies that "belief has some inquiry-theoretic properties that high credence does not. Belief is a settling attitude, it's a way of closing inquiry and more generally it's normatively incompatible with the IAs and inquiring; mere high credence lacks these properties" (2019: 309).

These distinctive inquiry-theoretic properties of belief have significant implications for the ethics of belief. As Friedman observes, "There may be all sorts of non-epistemic and non-evidential reasons to inquire (and so suspend). In general, inquiry looks to be a place at which the practical and the epistemic collide" (2017: 321). If we have practical (e.g., prudential or moral) reasons to continue inquiring (rather than closing inquiry), this implies that we have practical reasons to suspend judgment rather than believe. Friedman suggests that this explains why subjects in high-stakes cases of the sort typically used to motivate pragmatic encroachment ought not to believe an answer to high-stakes questions (like where the train stops, whether the bank is open, etc.) (2019: 305). When the stakes are high, we ought to spend more time thoroughly inquiring before closing inquiry and thereby forming a belief.[16]

This same explanation applies to subjects considering a question whose answers could reflect poorly on others. Intuitively we have a *prima facie* moral duty to engage in extensive, careful inquiry before believing ill of others. Thus, if we ought to inquire at time *t*, we ought not to believe ill of someone at *t*. This is a dialectically important point in defending doxastic wronging from its critics.[17] Some critics of doxastic wronging agree that we may have moral reasons to engage in careful, extensive

plausible interpretation of Friedman's considered view is thus that belief *descriptively* closes inquiry *within* a fragment, yet it is psychologically possible but *rationally incoherent* for a subject to simultaneously believe and inquire relative to *different* fragments.

[15] See Hieronymi (2008), Staffel (2019), Kelp (2021), Fraser (forthcoming), and Berger (ms. a) for similar views.

[16] Berger (ms. b) develops this idea to defend an inquiry-based account of encroachment.

[17] This same point can also help to defend related views, such as the claim that we should be epistemically partial to our friends (Keller 2004, Stroud 2006).

inquiry, but deny that these moral reasons affect what we ought to believe.[18] However, if inquiring entails suspending judgment, these critics are mistaken: reasons to inquire at *t* are reasons to suspend judgment (and thereby reasons against belief) at *t*, so reasons to inquire do in fact bear on what doxastic attitude we ought to have at a time.[19]

Attending to the distinctive relationship between outright belief and inquiry can therefore help to vindicate an important moral asymmetry between beliefs and credences. Moral reasons to inquire about whether *p* at *t* can affect whether one ought to believe *p* at *t* in virtue of constituting reasons to suspend judgment on *p* rather than believe *p* (even if one has strong evidence for *p*). But because moral reasons to inquire about whether *p* at *t* do *not* constitute reasons to have a certain credence in *p* at *t*, they do not affect what credence one ought to have in *p* at *t*.

This provides a very plausible explanation of our intuitions about **Wine Stain**: your spouse wronged you because she was too quick to conclude that you had been drinking again. At the time your spouse judged that you had been drinking, she ought to have inquired further into the question of whether you had been drinking and thus ought not to have believed that you drank at the colloquium. Importantly, your spouse ought to have inquired further *even though* she had reasonably strong evidence that you drank at the colloquium and was therefore justified in having a reasonably high credence that you drank at the colloquium. This indicates that the wronging is not located in your

[18] For example, see Enoch (2016: 31-32), Goldberg (2019: 2231), and Enoch and Spectre (forthcoming: §1).
[19] This idea could be developed in a subtly different way when combined with the view that simultaneously believing *p* and inquiring about whether *p* is *rationally incoherent*. (See n. 14 above.) This approach could appeal to Friedman's "OIA" norm, which says "if one ought not both inquire into *Q* at *t* and believe p^Q at *t*…and one ought to inquire into *Q* at *t*, then one ought not believe p^Q at *t*" [where *Q* is a question, p^Q is a complete answer to *Q*, and *t* denotes a particular time slice] (2019: 305). However, this approach faces the challenge of specifying the type of "ought" the consequent of OIA expresses. The first conjunct in OIA's antecedent expresses a wide-scope *coherence* requirement not to simultaneously believe and inquire, while the second conjunct in the antecedent expresses a *substantive* requirement (e.g., a prudential or moral requirement) to inquire. Thus, it is not entirely clear whether the requirement not to believe in OIA's consequent should be understood as a coherence requirement or a substantive requirement. The approach in the main text—on which believing *psychologically* entails closing inquiry—can avoid these difficulties by saying that the fact that someone ought to inquire *immediately* entails that they ought not to believe (without needing to appeal to coherence norms governing the combination of belief and inquiry-related states). (Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out this challenge.)

spouse's credence but rather in her prematurely closing inquiry. Because your spouse formed this belief *in virtue of* closing inquiry—rather than as a downstream consequence of closing inquiry—the distinctive wronging of prematurely closing inquiry is located in the formation of her belief itself (but not in her credence).

Belief's relationship to inquiry therefore shows that belief's settling a question and taking a stand is a morally significant property that *qualitatively* distinguishes belief from credence (*pace* Fritz and Jackson 2021: 1400). This bolsters the intuitive case for the claim that only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong. Imagine a variant of **Wine Stain** in which your spouse says, "I acknowledge that the wine stain on your shirt indicates that it's likely you drank at the colloquium. But I'm keeping an open mind and haven't concluded that you drank at the colloquium." Even though your spouse has a rational high credence that you drank at the colloquium, that she is keeping an open mind seems to make a tangible moral difference. If your spouse has not settled the question of whether you drank at the colloquium, it does not seem like she owes you an apology. Generalizing from this case, since beliefs take a stand in virtue of closing inquiry while credences do not, it is intuitively plausible that beliefs can distinctively wrong by prematurely closing inquiry.

It's worth observing that the claim that we morally ought to engage in careful, extensive inquiry before forming negative judgments about others does not entail either that we ought to never believe ill of others or that we can wrong others by closing inquiry when belief is epistemically required. Rather, on my proposal the moral reasons to continue inquiring and the epistemic reasons to close inquiry and thereby form a belief can both contribute to determining whether one (all-things-considered) ought to close or continue inquiry, either via moral encroachment or via some other mechanism.[20] There may be general moral reasons to engage in careful, extensive inquiry before

[20] See Quanbeck and Worsnip (forthcoming) for one such non-encroachment-based account of how practical and epistemic considerations interact to determine what we all-things-considered ought to believe.

believing ill of others, and the strength of these general reasons may be intensified in particular contexts (such as close interpersonal relationships).[21] Yet if the epistemic reasons in favor of forming a belief are sufficiently strong—for instance, if the evidence you currently possess is clearly incimrinating and it's unlikely that further inquiry would reveal exonerating counterevidence—then you may be all-things-considered required to close inquiry and thereby form a belief.[22] Importantly, this means that a belief's moral flaws are not *necessarily* derivative from epistemic flaws that the belief would have independently of the moral stakes.[23]

3.2 Wronging by Inquiring

§3.1 argued that we can wrong others by believing ill of them without first engaging in careful inquiry. But the distinctive relationship between inquiry and outright doxastic attitudes helps to explain how in some cases *suspending judgment* can also wrong in ways that credences cannot: namely, by constituting a lack of faith or trust in others.[24] In such cases, we ought positively to believe well of others.

My argument here relies on Lara Buchak's account of faith, according to which faith involves making a commitment without looking for or examining further evidence.[25] Buchak argues that "engaging in an inquiry itself constitutes a lack of faith. That is, faith requires not engaging in an inquiry whose only purpose is to figure out the truth of the proposition one purportedly has faith in" (2012: 232-233).[26] To illustrate this point, Buchak gives the following example:

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[21] See Stroud (2006) and Preston-Roedder (2018) for the view that we should be especially slow to believe ill of others with whom we have close interpersonal relationships, and Lord (2016) for the view that close interpersonal relationships can *intensify* the weight of our reasons.

[22] However, if Nelson (2010) is correct that there are no positive epistemic obligations, then believing is not epistemically required even when you have very strong evidence.

[23] Even if all beliefs that wrong are epistemically irrational, given moral encroachment, their epistemic irrationality may be *partly explained by* the moral stakes.

[24] Basu and Schroeder note that they themselves are divided over whether we can wrong others in virtue of not having certain beliefs about them (2019: n. 19). Nonetheless, I hope to show in this section that it's plausible that suspending judging can wrong. See von Klemperer (forthcoming) for another recent defense of the claim that suspension of judgment can wrong.

[25] While Buchak sometimes characterizes faith as involving a commitment to *action* (2012), Buchak elsewhere describes faith as involving a commitment to *maintaining a belief* even in the face of a certain amount of counterevidence (2017: 129-131; 2021). It is the latter characterization of faith as involving resilient, committal belief which I will assume here.

[26] The same may be true of trust (Nguyen forthcoming).

> **Envelope**: A man simply stumbles across an envelope which he knows contains evidence that will either vindicate his wife's constancy or suggest that she has been cheating. He seems to display a lack of faith in her constancy if he opens it and to display faith in her constancy if he does not. And this seems true even if the evidence has been acquired in a scrupulous way: we might imagine the wife herself presents the envelope to the man, as a test of his faith. (2012: 233)

One important difference between Buchak's and Friedman's views is that Buchak construes inquiry as an activity of seeking out evidence, whereas Friedman is primarily concerned with the attitudinal dimension of inquiry (i.e., having an interrogative attitude). But while on Friedman's account inquiring at *t* doesn't necessarily involve actively seeking out evidence at *t*, inquiring plausibly characteristically involves a (defeasible) disposition to seek out evidence (or at least attend to evidence which presents itself) relevant to the question about which one is inquiring. As such, if the husband in **Envelope** were to actively seek out evidence, he would likely manifest this disposition. But in any case, it's plausible that the husband could lack faith in his wife even if he doesn't actively seek out evidence of her constancy. Having faith in one's spouse's fidelity is incompatible with holding an IA regarding the question of whether they have been unfaithful.

Here is my suggestion: losing faith (or trust) in others in close interpersonal relationships without good reason can sometimes wrong them (albeit less severely than outright believing ill of them). In **Envelope**, the husband does nothing wrong by updating his credence in light of the new evidence that he acquires. (Indeed, not updating his credences would be epistemically irrational.) But in the absence of good reasons to doubt his wife's constancy, he owes it to her to continue having faith in her constancy. In virtue of adopting an IA towards—and thus inquiring about and suspending judgment about—the question of whether his wife has been inconstant, the husband loses his faith in her and thereby wrongs her. Crucially, this wronging cannot similarly be located in his credence. Even

if he maintains a high credence in her constancy, he can distinctively wrong her by suspending judgment and losing faith in her.[27]

In some circumstances—e.g., if the husband were confronted with strong, unambiguous evidence that his wife has been unfaithful—inquiring into his wife's constancy would not wrong her. But beginning to wonder about her constancy on the basis of weak evidence may wrong her. In general, there's nothing wrong with dropping a belief and adopting an IA towards some question after encountering new evidence bearing on that question. Sometimes epistemic rationality *requires* inquiring (and thus suspending judgment) when we encounter new evidence. But as I suggested in §3.1, both epistemic and moral considerations contribute to determining whether we all-things-considered ought to open or close inquiry. So, in morally fraught contexts in which our beliefs are (at least partly) constitutive of our faith or trust in other people, unless the new counterevidence we acquire is sufficiently strong (i.e., the epistemic reasons in favor of inquiring are sufficiently strong), the moral considerations counting against dropping a belief by opening inquiry and thereby adopting an IA may be decisive.[28]

This brief discussion of the connection between inquiry and faith indicates that if it is intuitively plausible that we can wrong others by losing faith in them (in virtue of opening inquiry by adopting an IA and thereby suspending judgment), it is likewise intuitively plausible that in this respect only our outright doxastic attitudes and not our credences can non-derivatively wrong others.

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[27] While I find it especially plausible that *losing* faith or trust in someone by inquiring into their fidelity or trustworthiness can wrong them, perhaps when you never had faith in another person, continuing to have an IA and thus continuing to suspend judgment when you ought to cease inquiring and have faith in the other person can wrong them. Cf. Morton and Paul's (2018) claim that we can wrong others by failing to believe in them.

[28] There may also be other ways in which suspending judgment can wrong. For instance, it's intuitively plausible that we can wrong others by keeping inquiry open too long before forming a belief. Suppose that in a variant of **Wine Stain**, you tell your spouse that you didn't drink at the colloquium and that the colloquium speaker spilled the wine on your sleeve. If your spouse remains suspicious and continues to inquire into (and thus suspend judgment about) whether you drank at the colloquium *despite your testimony*, it's plausible that your spouse thereby wrongs you.

4. Belief and Blame

This section argues that there is a second asymmetry between beliefs and credences which explains another respect in which only beliefs can non-derivatively wrong: only beliefs can constitute blame, and we can wrong others by unfittingly blaming them.

4.1 Wronging by Blaming

I will begin by discussing the potential of Buchak's (2014) account of the distinctive relationship between belief and blame (which is independent of her account of faith) to explain how beliefs but not credences can wrong. Buchak's argument proceeds by appealing to pairs of cases with the following structure. Agent A1 possesses strong, yet solely statistical, evidence for the proposition that person B acted wrongly, yet A1 is neither permitted to believe this proposition nor blame B. Agent A2 possesses *less probative* non-statistical (e.g., testimonial) evidence for the same proposition (with the same practical stakes), yet A2 is permitted to both rationally believe that B acted wrongly and blame B. This is the case even though the A1's evidence justifies a higher credence than A2's evidence does. Here is one such case:

> **Stolen Phone**: You leave the seminar room to get a drink, and you come back to find that your iPhone has been stolen. There were only two people in the room, Jake and Barbara. You have no evidence about who stole the phone, and you don't know either party very well, but you know (let's say) that men are 10 times more likely to steal iPhones than women. I contend that this isn't enough to make you rationally believe that Jake stole the phone. If you accused Jake, he could, it seems to me, rightly point out that you don't have evidence that he in particular stole the phone. He could protest that you only know something about men in general or on average. But you should have a high credence that Jake stole the phone…On the other hand, if we modified the case so that you know that men and women are equally likely to steal, but a fairly but not perfectly reliable eyewitness (let's say, 90 % reliable) tells you she saw Jake take it, it seems that you can rationally form the belief that Jake took it, even though you have a lower credence in this case. (2014: 292)

Cases like **Stolen Phone** have two important upshots. First, while rational credences are insensitive to the type of evidence on which they are based, rational beliefs are (at least sometimes) sensitive to the type of evidence on which they are based. Second—and more importantly for our

purposes—belief bears a distinctive normative relationship to blame which credences do not.[29] Buchak argues that reflection on our blaming practices yields a blame norm which makes reference to belief but not to credence. Here is a slightly modified version of Buchak's blame norm:

> *Blame Norm*: Blame someone if and only if you rationally believe that she transgressed, and blame her in proportion to the severity of the transgression.[30]

Importantly, this norm entails that we ought not to blame another person solely on the basis of a high credence (without an outright belief). In the first version of the case above, you should neither believe that Jake stole your iPhone on the basis of merely statistical evidence nor blame Jake for stealing your iPhone *even if* you have a justified high credence that he stole your iPhone. But in the second version of the case, you should blame Jake for stealing your iPhone on the basis of testimonial evidence *because* you are justified in believing that he stole your iPhone.

Consequently, an important normative difference between belief and credence is that beliefs about a transgression, but not credences about a transgression, can license blame. Buchak's blame norm implies that if you ought not to believe that someone has transgressed, then you ought not to blame them. Conversely, if you ought not to blame someone, then you ought not to believe that they transgressed. Thus, flaws in the blame can entails flaws in the belief on which the blame is based. Crucially, the fact that the blame is unjustified impugns only the belief (not the accompanying

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[29] Many other philosophers defend a similar view. For further discussion and numerous references, see Enoch and Spectre (2021).

[30] Buchak's original blame norm says, "Blame someone if and only if you believe (or know) that she transgressed, and blame her in proportion to the severity of the transgression" (2014: 299). However, this seems to express two distinct norms: one referencing *belief*, and one referencing *knowledge*. My preferred version of the subjective blame norm—stated in the main text— references *rational belief* rather than either knowledge or belief simpliciter. One might also supplement this blame norm by adding other necessary conditions for fitting blame (regarding blameworthiness, standing, etc.), but these details don't matter for our purposes.

credence). There is thus a unique and significant normative relationship which obtains between belief and blame but not between credence and blame.[31]

I suggest that not only does violating the blame norm render one's blame unfitting, but unfitting blame can *wrong* the person who is unfittingly blamed.[32] On one possible specification of this view, you wrong someone when you violate the "subjective" (or "evidence-relative") version of the blame norm described above: i.e., by blaming someone without rationally believing that they have transgressed. But as Buchak notes, we might also formulate an "objective" (or "fact-relative") version of the blame norm (referring to facts about transgressions): "Blame someone if and only if she transgressed, and blame her in proportion to the severity of the transgression" (2014: 300). So, on an alternative specification of the view that unfitting blame can wrong, violating the subjective blame norm can *risk* wronging the person who is blamed, while violating the objective blame norm can *constitute* wronging the person who is blamed.[33]

The claim that we can wrong others by unfittingly blaming them seems highly intuitive. In our interpersonal relationships, we often take offense and feel that we are owed an apology when we are blamed yet haven't transgressed.[34] Moreover, the claim that unfitting blame can wrong should be acceptable to critics of doxastic wronging. Enoch and Spectre themselves hold that we can wrong others in virtue of forming negative reactive attitudes like resentment on the basis of merely statistical evidence (i.e., in virtue of violating the subjective version of the blame norm) (2021: 5691). Of course,

[31] See Adler (2002: 217) and Lloyd (2022: §2) for further discussion of the distinctive relationship that belief (but not credence) bears to the reactive attitudes.

[32] I will remain neutral on whether unfitting blame always wrongs or only sometimes wrongs (e.g., in cases of close interpersonal relationships).

[33] Which of these specifications you prefer will depend on whether you accept an evidence-relative or fact-relative conception of rights (and wrongings corresponding to rights violations). Regarding doxastic wronging in particular, those who think that only false beliefs can wrong (such as Schroeder 2018, 2021) may prefer the objective/fact-relative specification of this claim, and those who think that true beliefs can also wrong (such as Basu 2019, Fabre 2022) may prefer the subjective/evidence-relative specification.

[34] Cf. Preston-Roedder's claim that we can wrong others by subjecting them to undeserved condemnation—i.e., by unfittingly blaming them (2013: 680-681).

much of the badness of unfitting blame consists in its downstream effects, such as sanctions or punishment. But its downstream effects do not exhaust the badness of unfitting blame. Especially in our close interpersonal relationships, a friend's or partner's simply having the attitude of unfitting blame (or associated reactive attitudes like resentment and indignation) is enough to elicit feelings of offense even if this attitude doesn't affect how they treat us. In **Wine Stain**, for instance, it seems intuitively plausible that your spouse owes you an apology, and thus wrongs you, by unfittingly blaming you on the basis of her belief that you've been drinking again.

If violating the blame norm can wrong others, I suggest that the wronging constituted by some beliefs—namely, judgments about others' faults or transgressions—can be explained by the wronging of unfittingly blaming others. Since the blame norm implies that flaws in the blame entail flaws in the belief on which the blame is based (without impugning the accompanying credence), the wronging constituted by unfitting blame may also entail that the belief (but not the credence) wrongs.[35] Thus, the wronging of the unfitting blame can infect one's belief *without* infecting one's credence. At a first pass, then, this appears to be a promising explanation of how beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong.

4.2 Belief as Constituting Blame

However, one might worry that appealing to the distinctive normative relationship belief bears to blame is ultimately insufficient to explain how beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong. First (and most importantly), the blame licensed by belief occurs downstream from the belief itself. Perhaps the moral risk of unfitting blame raises the stakes such that either more evidence or a different type of evidence is required to justify your belief. This makes the normative relationship between belief

[35] The wrongness of the belief on which the blame is based might *sometimes* be derivative from an epistemic flaw the belief would have independently of the moral stakes. But this isn't necessarily the case. According to proponents of moral encroachment, for instance, the moral stakes can make it such that a belief which would be epistemically justified in a low-stakes context is epistemically unjustified in a high-stakes context.

and blame analogous to the normative relationship between belief and action accepted by many proponents of pragmatic encroachment.[36] But even if the unfittingness of blame infects the *rationality* of belief, it doesn't show that the belief itself can non-derivatively *wrong* the person who is blamed. Second, the argument doesn't show that we *cannot* blame others on the basis of credences. Rather, it shows that we *ought not* to blame others on the basis of credences. So, if we can non-derivatively wrong others by unfittingly blaming them, perhaps we can likewise non-derivatively wrong them by violating the blame norm in a different way: by blaming them on the basis of a credence.

An argument responding to these objections could proceed as follows:

1) Exposing someone to unfitting blame can non-derivatively wrong them.
2) Beliefs can expose someone to unfitting blame.
3) Credences cannot expose someone to unfitting blame.
4) Therefore, beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong by exposing someone to unfitting blame.

If this argument is sound, it shows how the unfittingness of blame explains not only the irrationality of the belief on which the blame is based but also how this belief can non-derivatively wrong. Additionally, it provides a response to the second part of the objection. Unfittingly blaming someone on the basis of a credence (in violation of the subjective blame norm) wrongs them, but the wrong is located in the blame rather than in the credence on which the blame is based. However, unfittingly blaming someone on the basis of a belief involves a wrong located in both the blame *and* the exposure to blame. The latter wrong is located in the belief and thus constitutes a doxastic wrong.

Of course, the first premise needs defense. The claim that unfittingly exposing someone to blame can non-derivatively wrong them even if one refrains from actually blaming them may have

[36] Bolinger interprets Buchak's view as a version of moral encroachment on which morality affects the *type* of evidence on which certain beliefs should be based (2020: 17).

some intuitive plausibility. If you learn that you've been wrongly exposed to blame you may well feel that you are owed an apology. Nonetheless, our intuitions about this may be unclear, and one might reasonably worry that postulating an additional wronging associated with exposing someone to blame multiplies unnecessarily the types of wronging associated with unfitting blame. I won't take a stand here on whether exposing someone to blame can wrong them.

Instead, I will develop an alternative approach to connect doxastic wronging with blame. An account of how beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong can provide a more satisfying response to the objection by meeting two further conditions: 1) locating the wronging in the belief itself (rather than in the attitude the belief licenses or to which it exposes the wronged party), and 2) showing that the wronging cannot be similarly located in the credence itself. That is, a more satisfactory account will regard the distinctive relationship between belief and blame as metaphysical rather than normative.

We can develop such an account by making the following two claims: 1) that beliefs that represent someone as culpable are either partly or fully constitutive of blame, and 2) that when we wrong others by unfittingly blaming them, our beliefs also wrong them.[37] This account satisfies both of the conditions needed to explain the distinctive wronging of beliefs. First, if beliefs are constituted by blame, the wronging of a belief which represents someone as culpable can be located in the belief itself, rather than in attitudes the belief licenses or to which it exposes the wronged party. Second, belief—not credence—is the doxastic attitude which constitutes these reactive attitudes. Thus, credences cannot constitute blame or associated reactive attitudes like resentment and indignation. So, the claim that beliefs but not credences can non-derivatively wrong in virtue of constituting blame is a promising explanation of a relevant asymmetry between beliefs and credences.

[37] Buchak herself entertains (though does not outright endorse) the claim that beliefs partially constitute blame (2014: 308).

This account can be spelled out differently depending on whether one takes blame to be partly constituted by belief (in addition to some other component, such as an emotion or a desire), or whether one takes blame to be fully constituted by a belief. The first specification—that blame is partly constituted by belief—has a great deal of intuitive plausibility, and it is a widely endorsed view by philosophers writing on blame.[38] If blame is only partly constituted by belief, the claim that unfitting blame can wrong doesn't immediately entail that the constituent parts of the blame can also wrong. But the close relationship that Buchak identifies between belief and blame supports the claim that the wronging of the blame also implicates the belief constituting the blame. This claim is especially plausible if it's combined with Hieronymi's (2004) view that the "force" and the "sting" of blame comes from the beliefs constitutive of blame.

One influential version of the second specification of this claim—that a certain form of blame is fully constituted by belief—is developed by Gary Watson (1996). Watson argues, "In one way, to blame (morally) is to attribute something to a (moral) fault in the agent; therefore, to call conduct shoddy is to blame the agent" (1996: 230-231).[39] Watson explains that this type of blame "invoke[s] only the attributability conditions, on which certain appraisals of the individual as an agent are grounded. Because many of these appraisals concern the agent's excellences and faults—or virtues and vices—as manifested in thought and action, I shall say that such judgments are made from the aretaic perspective" (1996: 231). On Watson's view, the aretaic perspective needn't be a narrowly moral one; someone who "betrays her ideals by choosing a dull but secure occupation in favor of a potentially more enriching one" may be subject to negative aretaic evaluation (1996: 231). Rather, any appraisal of an excellence or fault attributable to an agent can constitute aretaic praise or blame. The

[38] As Coates and Tognazzini observe in their *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on blame, even many philosophers who think that blame also involves an affective or conative component take belief to be one important component of blame (2018: §2).

[39] This type of blame corresponds to "responsibility as attributability" (in contrast with "responsibility as accountability").

crucial point for our purposes is that aretaic blame is simply constituted by the belief that someone is blameworthy (or the belief that they exhibit a fault attributable to them). As Watson puts it, "The aretaic sense seems to collapse any distinction between blaming and judgments of blame. In this sense, one is worthy of blame just in case the attribution of fault is warranted. 'S is blameworthy for C' stands to 'S's conduct is faulty' as "P' is true' stands to 'P'; judging blameworthy is virtually blaming" (1996: 238).

While proponents of cognitivist accounts of blame typically do not specify whether having a high credence but not a belief that someone is blameworthy (or possesses a fault attributable to them) can constitute blame, I think there are good reasons to suppose that blame involves a settled, committal representation of someone as blameworthy. For instance, Berger (ms. a) argues that belief's role in closing inquiry helps to explain Buchak's blame norm. That is, only beliefs (not credences) can license blame because it is inappropriate to blame someone while still inquiring into the question of whether they are blameworthy. Likewise, I suggest, one must have closed inquiry into the question or whether someone is blameworthy in order to blame them. Thus, if it is intuitively plausible that we can non-derivatively wrong others by unfittingly blaming them, this provides intuitive support for the claim that beliefs can non-derivatively wrong but not for the claim that credences can non-derivatively wrong.

If this is right, belief's distinctive relationship to inquiry also helps to explain its distinctive relationship to blame. Having a high credence that someone is blameworthy may dispose you to regard them as blameworthy to the extent that having a high credence may dispose you to believe that they are blameworthy, but it doesn't yet constitute blame. Suppose your spouse says, "While it seems probable that you've been drinking again, I would need more evidence before concluding that you've been drinking again." Or suppose that you tell Jake that while you think it seems likely that he stole your iPhone, you are suspending judgment in the absence of particularized evidence that he is the

thief. These statements do not seem to express blame. They may express suspicion—even strong suspicion—but suspicion is qualitatively different from blame. So, I suggest that the fact that unfitting blame can wrong likewise helps to explain one way in which prematurely closing inquiry can wrong: namely, by forming beliefs that constitute unfitting blame.

The conjunction of these two claims—that beliefs can constitute blame and that credences cannot similarly constitute blame—satisfies the two conditions necessary to explain how beliefs distinctively wrong in virtue of their relationship to blame: 1) blame isn't a downstream attitude licensed by belief but rather is *constituted* by a negative judgment about another person, and 2) blame is *uniquely* constituted by belief because credences cannot constitute blame.

This explanation of doxastic wronging implies that if in **Wine Stain** your spouse believes that you are drinking again without attributing any fault to you—because she does not disapprove of your drinking, for instance—she does not doxastically wrong you in virtue of unfittingly blaming you. Rather, doxastically wronging someone by unfittingly blaming them occurs only when the content of the belief constituting blame includes a negative evaluative component.[40] This account of doxastic wronging therefore entails that the set of doxastic wrongs constituted by believing ill of others has a different extension and a different explanation than it has on Basu's and Schroeder's accounts. According to Schroeder's and Basu's respective views, doxastic wronging may be related to negative evaluations of various kinds (e.g., diminishing others' agency or viewing them as things rather than as persons). But on their accounts, the negative evaluation doesn't need to be part of the content of the belief itself in order for the belief to wrong. Moreover, as I noted above, their explanations of doxastic wrongs constituted by believing ill of others appeal to a lack of respect for others' personhood,

[40] This implication raises thorny questions about the relationship between the descriptive and evaluative content of our beliefs. But many of the paradigm cases of doxastic wronging that involve believing ill of others seem to contain negative evaluative content. Moreover, Buchak's blame norm refers to "transgressions," which I take to be a thick normative concept with an evaluative component. Believing that Jake stole your iPhone arguably involves believing that he committed a transgression (in the absence of exculpating factors or other considerations justifying theft) and thus having a belief with negative evaluative content.

individuality, or agency, rather than to the wronging of unfitting blame. In response to the objections raised by Fritz and Jackson and by Enoch and Spectre, I am thus proposing a revisionary account of at least some types of doxastic wronging.[41] For this reason, my argument is best construed as a defense of the bare thesis of doxastic wronging—the claim that beliefs can non-derivatively wrong—rather than a defense of Basu's and Schroeder's particular accounts of doxastic wronging.

5. Conclusion

This paper has defended the thesis of doxastic wronging from the objection that it generates significant pressure to accept that credences can likewise non-derivatively wrong and thus accept that there are worrisome conflicts between morality and epistemic rationality. To provide this defense, I have argued that belief's distinctive relationships to inquiry and blame explain why beliefs can non-derivatively wrong while credences cannot.

I suggest that these asymmetries reflect important qualitative differences between beliefs and credences which explain why beliefs are non-derivatively morally significant while credences are not. In virtue of closing inquiry, beliefs are active, committal representations of the world which are (either partly or wholly) constitutive of other morally significant attitudes such as faith, trust, and blame. By contrast, credences are simply passive, non-committal reflections of what we estimate our evidence to support, and they do not bear constitutive relationships to other morally significant attitudes.

The argument of this paper also has broader implications for the ethics of belief. To theorize about how morality affects what we ought to believe, we should attend to the connection between belief and other attitudes to which belief bears morally significant relationships. So I will conclude by

[41] I will remain neutral here on whether *all* cases of doxastic wronging essentially involve negative evaluative content. My argument here is consistent with accepting other types and other explanations of doxastic wronging.

suggesting that examining these relationships in more detail promises to be a fruitful direction for further research on the ethics of belief.

Acknowledgements: For helpful comments and/or discussion, I'm grateful to Rima Basu, Dominik Berger, Yifan Li, Genae Matthews, Ram Neta, Pavel Nitchovksi, Sarah Stroud, Leah Suffern, Zach Thornton, Oliver Traldi, and an audience at UNC-Chapel Hill. Special thanks to Alex Worsnip for providing detailed feedback on multiple drafts of this paper. Finally, thanks to an anonymous referee at *Philosophical Studies* for exceptionally helpful comments and suggestions.

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