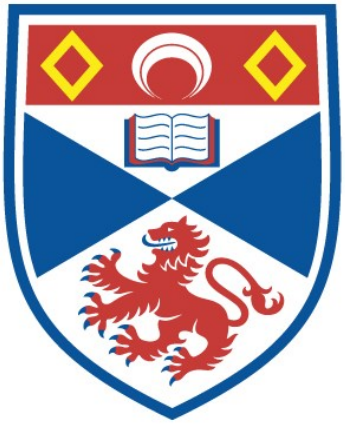
If you're so rational, why don't you have any friends?: a theory of doxastic wrongdoing and interpersonal rationality

James Shearer

A thesis submitted for the degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



2025

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with two key ideas. The first is doxastic wrongdoing, the idea that doxastic attitude could, in and of itself, constitute a wrong. The second is interpersonal rationality. A distinct sense of rationality applicable to both actions and beliefs that is to be contrasted against epistemic rationality. In exploring and elucidating these notions, I hope to make progress on issues facing contemporary social epistemologists. The thesis is split into two parts. In part one, we deal with doxastic wronging. In section 2, I motivate the idea that there are such things as doxastic wrongs. In section 3, I discuss how it is that belief could wrong by drawing on work done in Strawsonian Epistemology. In section 4, I then consider how the existence of doxastic wrongs impacts how we ought to reason. I suggest that doxastic wrongs impact what you ought to believe because they impact what is interpersonally rational.

The notion of interpersonal rationality on which I rely will be the focus of part two. In section 5, I clarify the notion further and consider what it is that the doxastic wrong theorist commits to in appealing to it. Sections 6 and 7 then consider objections to interpersonal rationality. In section 6, we consider an argument derived from the idea that interpersonal reasons, which bear on what is interpersonally rational, are reasons of the wrong kind. In section 7, we consider an argument which aims to show that interpersonal reasoning cannot occur as I have described. Having defended the notion, I then consider the work it can do in other areas of social epistemology, specifically for the doxastic partialist. In section 8, we will consider arguments for doxastic partiality. I argue that the partialist has much to gain from endorsing both the existence of doxastic wrongs and interpersonal rationality.

Candidate's declaration

I, James Shearer, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of MPhil, which is approximately 32,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. I confirm that any appendices included in my thesis contain only material permitted by the 'Assessment of Postgraduate Research Students' policy.

I was admitted as a research student at the University of St Andrews in September 2022.

I confirm that no funding was received for this work.

Date 04/01/2025 Signature of candidate

Supervisor's declaration

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of MPhil in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree. I confirm that any appendices included in the thesis contain only material permitted by the 'Assessment of Postgraduate Research Students' policy.

Date 6 Jan 2025 Signature of supervisor

Permission for publication

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews we understand that we are giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. We also understand, unless exempt by an award of an embargo as requested below, that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that this thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use and that the library has the right to migrate this thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis.

I, James Shearer, confirm that my thesis does not contain any third-party material that requires copyright clearance.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the publication of this thesis:

Electronic copy

No embargo on electronic copy.

Date 04/01/2025 Signature of candidate

Date 6 Jan 2025 Signature of supervisor

Underpinning Research Data or Digital Outputs

Candidate's declaration

I, James Shearer, hereby certify that no requirements to deposit original research data or digital outputs apply to this thesis and that, where appropriate, secondary data used have been referenced in the full text of my thesis.

Date 04/01/2025 Signature of candidate

Acknowledgments

This thesis is a culmination of around 16 months of writing and research. Naturally, over that time, I have had conversations with a huge number of people regarding the work. I am grateful to every single one of them and regret not being able to name them here. I benefited from the opportunity to present at the Scottish Epistemology Early Career Researchers Pre-Read Workshop and the Graduate Seminar. Both events were held at the University of St Andrews.

There are, of course, some people who I owe explicit mention. Justin Snedegar, whose insight and support as a supervisor has been indispensable over the past three years. I would not be the philosopher I am now if not for his teaching. Sandy Goldberg, for agreeing to be my secondary supervisor and providing me with more of his time than I was due. His critiques permeate this work, and I believe it is substantially better for them. Evie Moss, for listening to my ramblings ad nauseam and sharing the rollercoaster that was PhD applications.

I moved countries to start a PhD program during the writing of the thesis which would have been impossible but for the assistance of the following people. My parents, John and Wilma Shearer, who proved to be adept movers and whose constant support has made all of my endeavours possible. Mike and Cynthia Abelow, for providing a solution to every problem we encountered once in the USA. And finally, Gavi Abelow, whose intuitions regarding what *makes* a partner have always conveniently aligned with mine.

1. Introduction

You and a friend are having an argument. Your friend left their job last year to pursue writing full time; it has not gone well. So it goes for most in their position. You have long believed that it was never going to work out for them and, at a poorly timed moment, made this known. They are upset; they are angry; they demand to know why you do not believe in them. You calmly try to explain that the evidence is on your side, that the vast majority never make it, and that, in short, to believe anything else would have been irrational. "You're missing the point!", they yell. They leave, the conversation and, seemingly, the friendship having come to an end.

This is not, I contend, a mere thought experiment. Arguments like this happen every day. We go through our lives hoping that our friends not only act towards us with goodwill, but that they actually respect and believe well of us. What I have sought to highlight above is the tension that exists between this hope and the conditions of rational belief espoused in traditional epistemology. The tension, in short, between being rational, and having friends.

This thesis is primarily concerned with that tension. I aim to make clearer the role played by beliefs in our interpersonal lives. The thesis is split into two parts. In part one, I aim to explain what exactly it is, if anything, that you have done wrong in failing to believe in your friend. My suggestion is that your belief that your friend will fail is, at least on some tellings of the story, a doxastic wrong. Your friend legitimately expected you to believe in them, and, in failing to do so, your belief constituted a doxastic wrong. Doxastic wronging refers to the idea that doxastic attitudes themselves can wrong. In section 2, I motivate the idea that there are such things as doxastic wrongs. In section 3, I discuss how it is that belief could wrong by

drawing on work done in Strawsonian Epistemology. In section 4, I then consider how the existence of doxastic wrongs impacts how we ought to reason. Radical Moral Encroachment is discussed as one possible answer but is largely set aside in this work. As an alternative, I suggest that doxastic wrongs impact what you ought to believe because they impact what is interpersonally rational. Interpersonal rationality is a notion distinct from the epistemic rationality which your friend's hope was in tension with. We can resolve the tension, I suggest, by resolving which standard of rationality is pertinent to your situation.

The notion of interpersonal rationality on which I rely will be the focus of part two. In section 5, I clarify the notion further and consider what it is that the doxastic wrong theorist commits to in appealing to it. Sections 6 and 7 then consider objections to interpersonal rationality. In section 6, we consider an argument derived from the idea that interpersonal reasons, which bear on what is interpersonally rational, are reasons of the wrong kind. In section 7, we consider an argument which aims to show that interpersonal reasoning cannot occur as I have described. Having defended the notion, I then consider the work it can do in other areas of social epistemology, specifically for the doxastic partialist. In section 8, we will consider arguments for doxastic partiality. I argue that the partialist has much to gain from endorsing both the existence of doxastic wrongs and interpersonal rationality.

2.1 Motivation Arguments for the Existence of Doxastic Wrongs

Theorists of doxastic wrongs claim that beliefs *themselves* can wrong.[1] To clarify, the wrong is not "upstream" in the agent's engaging in an inquiry that gives rise to the belief or their being disposed to form the belief. Likewise, the wrong is not "downstream" in how the agent acts in light of the belief. The doxastic wrong theorist does not contest that there are upstream and downstream wrongs. The shop clerk who forms the belief that a black customer is planning to shoplift and so follows them around the store commits a wrong against the customer that is downstream from their belief. Equally, if I grow needlessly suspicious of my partner and so pay a PI to stalk them, then my inquiry will constitute a wrong against my partner upstream from any belief I form in light of the investigation.[2] What the doxastic wrong theorist claims is that often in these cases the agent commits an additional wrong in virtue of the belief from which the other wrongs were up or downstream.

The aim of this section is to motivate the idea that there is such a thing as a doxastic wrong. To do this I offer two arguments. In 2.2, I consider the apology argument, which argues that you sometimes ought to apologise for your beliefs, thereby indicating that they were wrongful. In 2.3, I offer the disposition argument, which considers what is at fault with a person who is disposed to doubt their partner. Both these arguments aim to convince you that positing the existence of doxastic wrongs does the best job of explaining what would otherwise be puzzling about the cases they signal out. Thus, I term them "motivation arguments". In 2.4, I consider an issue that might be had with motivation arguments in general and elaborate further on what I see as the goal of doxastic wrong theory. Arguments

[1] Strictly, the claim is about doxastic attitudes generally rather than just beliefs. For simplicity, I will tend towards talking about belief, but the reader is welcome to substitute their preferred doxastic attitude.

[2] Interestingly, this characterisation allows that a wrong might be both downstream from one belief and upstream from another.

for how it is that doxastic attitudes could wrong (mechanical arguments) will be the subject of section 3.

2.2 The Apology Argument

Consider the apology argument, a motivation argument given by (Basu & Schroeder, 2019) that focuses on the aptness of apologies:

Recovering Alcoholic Partner (RAP): Suppose my partner is a recovering alcoholic who is 8 months sober. They come back late one night from a work function smelling of wine. Upon smelling the wine, I form the belief that they have relapsed. In fact, they have not relapsed; the visiting speaker has spilt wine on their sleeves. When my partner finds out about my belief, they ask for an apology.

Plausibly, if I am disposed to doubt the recovery of my partner, then this is an upstream wrong that I should apologise for. Additionally, if I confront my partner and they find out about my belief, that would be a downstream wrong that I should also apologise for. However, if I apologise only for these wrongs, then my apology will look inadequate. If I say things like “I am sorry for being disposed to doubt you” or “I am sorry you found out that I believed badly of you”, then it is not difficult to imagine my partner being dissatisfied.

If the only wrongs committed against my partner in RAP are the up and downstream ones, then my apology being inadequate would be puzzling given the content of the apology addresses both of them. On the other hand, there is no puzzle if there exists a further doxastic wrong for which I have not apologised. The apology argument, then, turns on an inference to

the best explanation. In the course of explaining the insufficiency of the apology, we find good reason to posit and thereby accept the existence of doxastic wrongs.

I think this is the right kind of argument to show that more than just downstream wrongs are occurring in RAP. Merely saying "I am sorry you found out" classically betrays that the apologiser has misunderstood what went wrong. However, the result is less clear cut in the upstream case, and here the argument trades on intuition. Is it really that plausible that apologising for being disposed to doubt will not be adequate? What the doxastic wrong theorist needs is a new motivation argument that addresses this worry.

In 2.2, I aim to give such a development. The core idea is that the objector who insists on the adequacy of apologising for being disposed to doubt faces a troubling explanatory burden. They will struggle when explaining the plausible difference in wrong between having an objectionable disposition and that disposition being manifested.

2.3 The Disposition Argument

Let us start by getting clear about what upstream wrongs are committed in RAP. The main upstream wrong that both doxastic wrong theorists and the objector of this section will agree is committed is that of *being disposed to doubt your partner*.[3] This is the general disposition; it is natural to ask what it consists in, i.e. what are the stimulus conditions of the disposition and what are the manifestations when the disposition is stimulated. For example, if I am

[3] You may be sceptical that dispositions can, in themselves, wrong at all. I must confess to finding the idea very intuitive. For instance, it seems especially clear to me that part of what a physically abusive partner does wrong is to be disposed to harm their victim.

disposed to doubt my partner, then part of that disposition may be that when they come home late I ask to see their phone. The stimulus here being my partner coming home late, and the manifestation being the request.[4]

The only claim on which I will rely is that believing poorly is one of the manifestations of a disposition to doubt. I take this to be what distinguishes being a doubter from merely being curious. It is very natural to wonder about what your partner is doing or to inquire into the cause of a stain. What makes these activities pernicious is being disposed to conclude the reasoning by believing badly. Merely being disposed to reason about your partner is not enough to be disposed to doubt.

Both the doxastic wrong theorist and the objector in this section agree that a wronging disposition to doubt is present in the case. The distinction is that the objector thinks there are no doxastic wrongs and therefore must not appeal to them when explaining what wrongs are committed in RAP. Accepting this position will cause problems when explaining the moral difference between having a reprehensible disposition to doubt and that disposition being manifested.

First, note that if I wrong my partner by having this disposition, then it is a wrong I perpetuate before it is manifested. I commit that wrong before I smell the wine and believe they have been drinking. This leaves a puzzle for the objector; they will owe us an explanation of the moral difference between having the disposition and that disposition being manifested. The objector may talk of downstream wrongs, when I imply to my partner that I think they have been drinking for instance, but, between the stages of having the disposition

[4] For more on dispositions see (Choi and Fara, 2021).

to doubt and my acting in some wrongful manner in light of the manifestation, it is not clear that, for the objector, there is an additional wrong. The agent with a wrongful disposition to doubt and an agent who has just manifested that disposition by doubting, but where there are not yet any downstream consequences, appear to commit the same number of wrongs under the objector's view.

To avoid the charge of question begging, I will need to explain why there is a puzzle here. Why should the objector need to explain what is worse about the disposition to doubt being manifested given they do not think doxastic wrongs exist? You might think that there is a link between a disposition being wrongful and a wrong being committed when that disposition is manifested. It would at least be very odd to say that some disposition was wrongful but that the manifestations of that disposition never wronged and lacked the potential to wrong. Presumably the objector is not taking a position wherein manifestations of a wrongful disposition to doubt never wrong. In which case, they must explain when it is that these manifestations do represent additional wrongs without appealing to the existence of doxastic wrongs.

Whatever the character of this link, it will not require that the manifestations of a disposition always constitute a wrong for the disposition to be wrongful. For instance, if I were disposed to not cover my mouth when I cough, then I would be considered to be doing something wrong by having that disposition, at least partially because when it is manifested in company I will cough on others. However, the manifestations of that disposition need not always wrong. It is not clear that I would be wronging anybody if it manifested when I am by myself.[5] This leaves the objector some room; I suspect what they will want to do is tie the

[5] And immediately clean the relevant surfaces, of course.

wrongness of the disposition being manifested with the manifestation's capacity to cause downstream wrongs.

Acknowledging this possibility reveals a unified position for the objector where the wrongness of both a disposition and its manifestations is tied to a capacity to impose risk. On this view, my disposition to doubt my partner is wrongful because it imposes on them an undue risk of harm. The manifested beliefs can be wrongful in just the same way when their occurrence constitutes an additional risk imposition. The risks here being that I may act in an adverse way towards my partner when I believe poorly of them.

You might worry that the objector, by asserting that beliefs wrong when they impose risk, has appealed to the existence of doxastic wrongs. What is notable about the objector's explanation, and the reason that this does not represent a collapse to doxastic wrong theory, is that risk imposition is a very generic type of wronging. With enough imagination, we can create a scenario where any action or attitude turns out to be a wrongful imposition of risk. There seems nothing inherently wrong with dropping pennies from the top of the Empire State Building. However, in practice I will be subject to apt criticism (and pricey lawsuits) for doing just that due to the risk I will impose on the pedestrians below. Beliefs wrong in just the same way on the objector's view. While doxastic wrong theorists vary in their account of how beliefs wrong, none, to my knowledge, appeal to risk imposition. They invariably make stronger claims than that, where beliefs can wrong because of their capacity to have an impact beyond their downstream effects. In short, the objector's position does not entail an appeal to doxastic wronging because no doxastic wrong theorist would be satisfied if all doxastic wronging amounted to was risk imposition.

Adopting this position may answer my challenge without appeal to doxastic wrongs, but it comes with costs, particularly when we turn our attention to what the holder of a wrongful disposition ought to do about it. Plausibly, what I ought to do when I am wrongfully disposed to doubt is take the steps needed to lose the disposition. On the objector's position, this will not be my only option. Because the wrongness of both the disposition and its manifestation is tied to the risk of downstream harm, it will be the case that I can rectify my wronging disposition by merely being careful not to cause downstream harms when my disposition is manifested. Equally, I could just as well solve the problem by masking my disposition such that it is never manifested. Should I succeed in either masking my disposition or avoiding acting wrongly when it is manifested, then that will be just as good as having succeeded in getting rid of the disposition altogether. In all three scenarios, the basic wrong that underlied why a disposition or manifestation constituted a wrong on the objector's account will have been dealt with.

This cannot be the correct result for the same reason that the apology argument demonstrated that more than just downstream wrongs occur in RAP. Imagine I apologised to my partner by telling them that I would work on hiding my doubting beliefs from them, or that I would make sure to avoid reasoning about them in the future. I cannot imagine my partner would be satisfied with this response. Even if it were actually the case that I could mitigate all risk by pursuing these options, presumably my partner will still desire that I become the sort of person who is not disposed to doubt them, not just hide what my dispositions are. Now, it might be the case that getting rid of the disposition would be more difficult than the alternatives, and masking the disposition or limiting the risk of downstream harm may be better than nothing. It should be clear, however, that my partner would still prefer that I alter

my disposition.[6] Yet the objector cannot properly vindicate that desire given they must tie the disposition's wrongness to harms that are downstream from its manifestations. All three options are equivalent on that view. So long as that is so, addressing a wrongful disposition need not require getting rid of that disposition.

This result is a serious mark against the objector who wants to reject doxastic wrongs. Note, however, the elegance of explanation available to these problems once we admit the existence of doxastic wrongs. Explaining what is worse about a wrongful disposition to doubt being manifested is as simple as "when the disposition is manifested, I thereby commit an additional wrong, so I am in a worse spot than when I merely had the disposition". Additionally, the masking and avoidance worries do not arise on the doxastic wrong theorist's solution. There can be no avoidance, because it is in having the disposition manifested that the wrong occurs. Equally, masking cannot be a serious solution, because reasoning about my partner and updating my beliefs about them is an all but necessary part of an active relationship. Any solution the objector may give will be more cumbersome than that provided by the doxastic wrong theorist. I take this as good evidence for the existence of doxastic wrongs over and above the apology argument initially offered by Basu and Schroeder.

2.4 The Goal of Doxastic Wrong Theory

Before moving on to the mechanical question, I want to address a lingering concern that some will have with the arguments presented thus far. Both the apology and disposition arguments

[6] There may be cases where a seemingly negative disposition is central enough to a person's character that loved ones would not wish them to be disposed differently. I suspect that a disposition to doubt one's partner will rarely be the sort of disposition that loved ones would wish to be preserved.

are aimed at convincing you that doxastic wrongs are the most plausible candidate for the wrong committed in RAP. However, there are many elements of RAP that are underspecified (details of our relationship, just how strong the smell is, previous instances of relapse, etc.). This can leave open the worry that the doxastic wrong theorist is heavily relying on the intuition that there is a wrong in RAP that needs to be explained. If you do not share this intuition, then you could think that, without further specification of the case, this reliance is unwarranted. Indeed, a common response I hear when describing RAP is "I do not think I would feel wronged if my partner did that.".[7]

I take this thought to motivate many opponents of doxastic wrong theory.[8] It will not be the task of this thesis to present and argue against each of their objections in turn. Rather, I want to acknowledge the idea that for some, no wrong will occur in RAP, and show that this is, in fact, compatible with the existence of doxastic wrongs. In doing so, I hope to defang objections which are led by that thought. On this point, I follow Baril who writes regarding RAP:

"Our question, then, is not whether [the] belief constitutes a doxastic harm, but rather: In what versions of this story, if any, does [the] belief constitute a doxastic harm, and what explanation—or explanations—can we give of that harm?" - (Baril, 2022. 287)

---

[7] This is by far the most common line of objection that I receive when I have presented this work. I am particularly indebted to Sanford Goldberg and Eric Wallace for their formulations of the worry, but I am thankful to all who have discussed it with me.

[8] I have in mind here two types of objectors. The first will argue that there are wrongs that could have occurred in RAP relating to my attitudes, but that they are not doxastic. They will argue that on the most plausible tellings of RAP these wrong making attitudes will not be present. See (Osborne, 2020) who suggests "regard" as having the capacity to wrong. The second argues that accepting that wrongs can be constituted by attitudes in cases like RAP leads to some unacceptable consequence. See (Sher, 2021) who argues that attitudes cannot be morally wrong.

Baril is concerned with doxastic harms, but the spirit of the point is unchanged. It is perfectly conceivable that whether or not a wrong has occurred in RAP will come to hinge on unspecified features of the case. The goal of the doxastic wrong theorist, then, is to show that there are versions of RAP wherein doxastic wrongs occur and explain how. It is not to argue that anyone who finds themselves in a situation like RAP will automatically be subject to a wrong.

What I have offered you so far are motivation arguments; they are arguments that aim to motivate the thought that, at least on some tellings, doxastic wrongs are occurring in cases like RAP. In what follows we will explore the mechanics on which such wrongs can occur and what this tells us about the role our beliefs play in our interpersonal lives. If you find yourself falling into the sceptical camp and are unsure that any wrongs at all are occurring in RAP, then I would ask you to keep an open mind about this story. My goal is not necessarily to change your mind about whether or not *you* would be wronged by a belief held by your partner. Rather, I hope to convince you that doxastic wrongs are real, that there are versions of RAP where *my* beliefs can wrong my partner, and to explain how these wrongs occur in such a way that my partner could be wronged in RAP while you would not be.

3.1 The Mechanics Question - Strawsonian Epistemology

We now turn to answering the mechanical question: how is it that beliefs can wrong? To answer that, we will consider the Strawsonian Epistemology of Marušić and White.[9] The intent of this section is to give an overview of how beliefs wrong according to Strawsonian Epistemology. In doing so, we will encounter the notion of reasoning from a stance and the

[9] (Marušić & White, 2018) see also (Marušić, 2015)

idea that we may hold legitimate expectations regarding how people reason and believe about us. These two concepts are explanatorily powerful; they motivate not just an answer to the mechanical question, the subject of this section, but also the impact question (how doxastic wrongs influence reasoning) and have implications for wider themes in social epistemology. I introduce stances in 3.2 and legitimate expectations in 3.3. The further work these concepts can do will be the subject of the following sections of this thesis.[10]

3.2 Stances

In their 2017 paper, Marušić and White give an answer to the mechanical question inspired by Strawson's notion of a *stance*.[11] A stance, according to Strawson, is a collection of attitudes that we take towards some target. These stances "set the tone", orientating our reasoning and setting expectations for our interactions with the target of the stance. The two opposing stances important for our purposes are the participant and objective stances.

Emblematic of being in the participant stance is holding "reactive attitudes". Reactive attitudes reflect an expectation that the target of our stance act towards us with goodwill, that they appreciate our needs, and that they do not needlessly frustrate our ends. Resentment and gratitude are emblematic reactive attitudes. We feel resentment towards agents whose actions betray a lack of regard for our expectations and gratitude when their actions indicate appreciation.

---

[10] I leave aside here (Schroeder, 2018) as an alternate answer to the mechanical question. Schroeder's theory of the mechanics of wronging is relatively conservative, certainly more conservative than the theory offered in this thesis. However, the core idea, that beliefs wrong when they falsely diminish, I take as compatible with Strawsonian Epistemology. See also (Basu, 2023a)

[11] (Strawson, 1962/2008)

The objective stance, by contrast, consists in "objective attitudes". These attitudes do not preclude having expectations regarding the target of the stance, but in place of resentment or gratitude we may feel disappointment or satisfaction if the expectations are frustrated or met. This is because the target of the objective stance is viewed just as an object in the world, subject to the relevant natural laws and not properly in control of itself.

Typically, there will be a specific appropriate stance to take toward a target. It will be apt, for example, to take an objective stance towards my car. This becomes clear when we consider the appropriate attitudes to hold should my car break down. If that happens, then it will be very natural to be disappointed with the car and hold it in the objective stance. It will be very odd, on the other hand, should I express resentment or otherwise indicate that I hold my car in a participant stance. That the objective stance would be apt and the participant stance inapt is easily explained via agency. The car is just not the sort of thing that should be thought to be properly in control of its actions or capable of expressing goodwill.

Often the apt stance for me to take towards you will be the participant stance because you, in virtue of your agency, are precisely the type of target most likely to be in control of their actions and capable of goodwill. Conversely, if I take up an objective stance towards you, then I will be prone to act in such a way as to violate expectations of respect that you will likely have placed on me. I will, for instance, diminish you by attributing the outcomes of your actions as just a product of your environment rather than credit them to you since I will not see you as properly in control of those results. Notably, this connection between holding agents in the apt stance and respecting them opens up the space to see when it can be apt to

hold agents in the objective stance. It may be that I best respect you by viewing you in purely objective terms if, for instance, that is how you *want* to be viewed.

3.3 Legitimate Expectations

This connection between stances and respect gives rise to the idea that we can legitimately expect certain beliefs from others. It is in the violation of these legitimate expectations that we will find our answer to the mechanical question. In this section, I will motivate the idea that we can legitimately expect others to hold us in certain stances as a matter of respect. I will then argue that this extends to legitimate expectations on belief.

To do this, it will be worth taking a moment to build out the concept of "expectation". As (Basu, 2023b. 149-160) notes, to say that you expect something can denote a range of possible attitudes towards the thing you expect. Sometimes my expectations are merely predictive, such as when I expect that it will rain tomorrow. My expectations can also be prescriptive when they reflect how I want the world to be, such as when I expect my friend to do their half of the assignment. Importantly, sometimes these things diverge. I may expect it to rain even when I wish it to be dry, and I might expect my friend to do their work even when I know that they have been spending their days at the poker tables.

The kind of expectation that we are interested in here are so called "weighty expectations". These are expectations that express a prescription, but, in addition, impress on their target a reason to see the expectation fulfilled. It is not an idle difference to my friend whether or not I expect them to do the work. In holding the expectation, I confer on them an additional

reason to do it. Namely, that if they fail, they will violate that expectation; thereby disappointing me.

Weighty expectations will be our notion of expectation going forward. The next step is to explain how it is that expectations can be thought of as legitimate. Clearly, not all expectations are legitimate. I could, at this moment, expect my neighbour to take my trash out on collection day and complain to them if they fail to. However, if I do this, then they will reject my expectation as illegitimate, insisting that I have no standing to complain.

The question, then, is under what circumstances would an expectation regarding the stance from which another reasons about us be legitimate? This is where the connection between stance and respect becomes pertinent. As I have suggested above, stances are intimately related to action. So if my holding you in a particular stance will lead to me disrespecting you, then I would suggest that you could legitimately expect me to not hold that stance. This, from the premise that, in general, you can legitimately expect me to take the measures required to respect you.

One additional way to develop the idea that an expectation could be legitimate is via friendships. Friendships, it is natural to suggest, are partly constituted by expectations. What makes the case that we are friends and not strangers is that I expect from you differently than I expect from a stranger. What makes it the case that my friendship with you is different from my friendship with another is that I expect of you differently than I expect of my other friend.

If our friendship is one that we are mutually happy with, then it would be odd to say that the expectations that comprise it were anything other than legitimate.[12] Additionally, satisfying these expectations would seem to be a matter of respect. If I elect to not satisfy them, then that will amount to a rejection of a core part of the friendship. What remains is whether or not an expectation regarding the stance you hold me in could part constitute our friendship. I am inclined to think they could. One way that relationship dynamics are characterised is in how the parties view one another. Our friendship might be one where we frequently give each other honest and critical feedback, and so, for the expectations to be met, we will need to tend to hold one another in the objective stance. Equally, our friendship could be one of unquestioned support for one another, in which case a tendency towards the participant stance will be necessary. If holding in a certain stance is a requirement for meeting the expectations of our friendship, then it follows that we can legitimately expect one another to hold those stances.[13]

For some, these moves from stances to respect to legitimate expectations will continue to look like leaps. They may insist that respect is a matter of being treated in a particular way, and so cannot, as a matter of principle, be directly related to reasoning from a stance. From this it would follow that legitimate expectations, in so far as they relate to respect, can only extend to how people act towards us.

I admit to finding these connections between stances, respect, and legitimate expectations, intuitively compelling and so do not feel the pull of scepticism here. Further, I think insisting

[12] Barring some account of expectations which are morally repugnant. If there are such expectations, then plausibly they are not legitimate, even if all the involved parties are happy with them.

[13] I take this point to be related to the idea of "holding in personhood". See (Lindemann, 2014).

on this objection amounts to a view where being respected is a matter of what you can observe. Taking this view has odd consequences. It is not in the finding out that people are talking behind your back in which you are disrespected, as the objector's view implies. Rather, your finding out is how you come to know that you have been disrespected. Regardless, this notion of having legitimate expectations on stances, if true, is explanatorily powerful. Thus, in order to explore the explanations on offer, we will assume it going forward. I would invite those who remain sceptical to join me on this exploration, if only as a theoretical exercise.

Allow, then, that we may have legitimate expectations regarding the stance in which we are held given the connection between stance and respect. It is this idea of legitimate expectations which Marušić and White use to explain how it is that beliefs can wrong. In order for legitimate expectation to explain the mechanics of doxastic wronging, it will have to be that our expectations regarding stances entail legitimate expectations on doxastic attitudes generally. We can get this result via the fact that our stances orient our reasoning and thereby can change what doxastic attitudes we form.

Consider a case similar to RAP where I am considering what to believe about my partner's intention to quit smoking.[14] Suppose evidence in such cases tends to support believing that my partner will not succeed. It so happens that the statistics indicate that people who quit tend to relapse, and I have no special reason to think that my partner will buck the trends.

There are two ways that I might reason about my partner's success, which reflect the objective and participant stances. I might reason about them objectively, thereby taking the

[14] This case is similar to the one focussed on in (Marušić, 2015. Ch. 7)

objective stance and recognising that my evidence strictly warrants believing that they will relapse. While my evidence from which I reason may well include facts about how determined my partner is or how earnestly I understand their intentions to be, I will ultimately have no reason to believe that they will be an exception. After all, determined, well intentioned people fail in their goals all the time. However, if I think this way, then I will fail to appreciate my partner as properly in control of their actions. Rather, I reason about them as I would an object, where the set of facts about my partner and their environment determine whether or not they will succeed.

If my partner tells me that they will quit smoking and I believe they will fail, then the situation is similar to RAP. Once again, if my partner were to find out about my belief they would most likely want an apology, one that could not be apt unless I apologised for the belief. The sort of wrong that would be committed here fits naturally as an expectation violation; my partner expected me to believe well of them, and I failed. Specifically, my partner's legitimate expectation that I hold them in the participant stance has extended to my holding the type of beliefs that are in keeping with reasoning from that stance.

That a change of stance can change our doxastic attitudes becomes clear if we consider what happens in the above case when I hold my partner in the participant stance. In that case, I treat my partner not as an object but as an autonomous agent in control of their successes. This will alter the course of my reasoning. Recognising my partner's autonomy and their intention will warrant believing in their success.[15] The resulting belief will be in no danger of

[15] See (Marušić, 2015) for a thorough exploration of this type of reasoning.

wronging my partner, given it will be in keeping with their legitimate expectations on my attitudes and stance.

This is not to say that I always ought to reason about others from the participant stance; there will be limits.[16] Notably, sometimes your partner will require of you that you judge them objectively and in doing so, hold them in the objective stance. Imagine your partner asks you to judge how likely they would be to get the promotion that has recently been advertised. It is important that you be accurate here in order to give your partner helpful advice. You may think your partner is wonderful and well deserving of a promotion, but letting that get in the way of objectively determining their odds will not satisfy their legitimate expectation that you attempt to be a reliable judge of the odds. Here we have an instance of being under a legitimate expectation to hold your partner in the objective stance.

This highlights an important feature of the view; that agents have autonomy over legitimate expectations regarding how people reason about them. Some people, I imagine, will desire that others reason about them only objectively. They will scorn being held in the participant stance and find it patronising. Others will have a strong preference for being held in the participant stance, they will find it empowering and consider it part of being properly supported by their friends and family. To some extent, this is just a matter of taste, which should be unsurprising. Just as there is no uniform set of actions that respect all agents, there also no uniform way to reason that guarantees respect in all instances.[17]

---

[16] See (Basu, 2019b) and (Schroeder, 2019)

[17] Entailed here is the idea that the expectations that you will satisfy in being a good friend to one person can be quite different to the expectations you will need to satisfy to be a friend to another person. I find this acceptable on the premise that "to be a good friend" is not one thing. For more on this point, see (Keller, 2022)

As a default rule, however, we will assume the participant stance as the appropriate stance to take towards friends and partners. This leaves us with an account both of how beliefs wrong (when they frustrate legitimate expectation) and a general guide on how to avoid these wrongs (reason from the appropriate stance).[18]

4.1 The Impact Question

With an answer to the mechanics question in hand, we can now turn to the impact question: how does the existence of doxastic wrongs bear on belief? In this section I present my novel answer to that question. Doxastic wrongs bear on what you ought to believe because they bear on what is interpersonally rational. This notion of interpersonal rationality will then be defended and developed in the rest of the thesis. Before presenting the notion of interpersonal rationality, we will first discuss Radical Moral Encroachment (RME) as an alternative answer to the impact question. This discussion will be brief. I aim only to explain what the view is and give you my reasons for setting it aside. 4.2 will feature the discussion of RME. In 4.3 and 4.4, I present the notion of "projects". This notion of projects will give rise to a notion of project-relative rationality which will be the subject of 4.5.

[18] One wrinkle to this answer to the mechanics question are cases where an agent has standing to hold a legitimate expectation but does not. Dead people, for instance, do not have expectations (legitimate or otherwise), and so, on the view thus presented, they cannot be subject to doxastic wrongs. I am hopeful that these cases can be captured by my view via an appeal to something like possible legitimate expectations which would have been appropriate to hold but were not. I will not, however, develop that line here. Even if a move such as that will not work, there is still a good number of living people capable of legitimate expectations who are captured by my theory. It is those people who will be our focus for the purposes of this thesis.

4.2 Radical Moral Encroachment

If doxastic wrongs exist, then an impact question arises regarding how their existence bears on what doxastic attitudes we ought to form. Conventionally, theorists like Basu and Schroeder have endorsed RME in order to answer the impact question.[19] I will discuss RME only briefly here. My main objective in the following sections will be to flesh out an alternative theory, one motivated by the idea that doxastic wrongs bear on the rationality of our attitudes because they bear on what is interpersonally rational rather than what is epistemically rational.

Moral encroachment is the thesis that moral considerations may somehow bear on epistemic rationality. (Bolinger, 2020) highlights that there are multiple "varieties" of moral encroachment in the literature. In general, these theories posit some relationship between whether or not a belief is epistemically rational and some moral factors related to the belief. Under RME, the pertinent moral features that bear on rationality are those of the beliefs themselves. For (Schroeder, 2018) and (Basu, 2019a) the mechanics of RME go as follows: when there is a risk that holding a particular belief would be morally bad (because it constituted a doxastic wrong, for instance), then that raises the bar necessary to be epistemically justified in holding the belief.

The existence of doxastic wrongs helps make RME more plausible because the former naturally motivates the idea that doxastic attitudes can directly have morally pertinent features.[20] RME, on the other hand, fits nicely into the doxastic wrong theorist's picture for

[19] Both (Schroeder, 2018) and (Basu, 2019a) defend versions of this theory

[20] (Jackson & Fritz, 2021. 1391-1392)

two reasons. First, it neatly answers the impact question; RME ensures that the moral stakes of wronging beliefs influence what is epistemically rational. Second, RME helps preserve a "No Conflicts" principle between epistemic and moral standards. The intuition being that it should never be the case that an epistemically impeccable belief is morally impermissible.[21]

Both these reasons have pushed doxastic wrong theorists towards motivating RME, but they have their limitations. To the first reason, while it is true that RME does provide a neat answer to why doxastic wrongs are important rationally, it requires the endorsement of a controversial encroachment theory. Encroachment theories (notably pragmatic encroachment) have garnered a growing number of defenders in recent years, but their plausibility is still contentious.[22] This in itself, I think, should motivate the doxastic wrong theorists to consider alternatives to RME that do not require the adoption of the encroacher's baggage. Specifically, one that does not require making controversial claims about what being epistemically rational amounts to.

Additionally, the No Conflicts principle that RME helps preserve may be undermotivated. The force of the principle seems to be a worry that conflicts between moral and epistemic standards will be unresolvable, thereby allowing people who commit doxastic wrongs to excuse themselves by arguing epistemic impeccability. No Conflicts addresses this worry because its truth would ensure that the two standards never diverge. I agree that instances of

---

[21] (Basu & Schroeder, 2019) and (Schroeder, 2018) are certainly motivated by this concern, although Basu moves away from it in later work. See (Basu, 2021. 112). An important part of Schroeder's view is that only false beliefs can constitute wrongs which makes the idea that all doxastic wrongs are epistemically impermissible more plausible.

[22] See (Brown, 2013) for just one point of contention. For a defence of the view, see (Fantl & McGrath, 2009)

truly unresolvable conflict between these two standards should worry us but endorsing No Conflicts is not the only way to avoid that result. Specifically, I believe the Strawsonian inspired view developed in the rest of the paper gives us this alternative. The possibility that No Conflicts is both undermotivated and not the doxastic wrong theorist's only option should encourage the search for alternatives to RME.[23]

4.3 Towards Epistemic and Interpersonal Rationality

The Strawsonian epistemology above gives us a way of answering the impact question without RME style appeals to epistemic standards. When answering the mechanics question we saw that beliefs have the potential to wrong because other agents have a stake in the doxastic attitudes we hold regarding them. I am unlikely to do well socially should I consistently violate these legitimate expectations. It will often be the case that satisfying these expectations is not just in the interests of the agent holding them, but in mine as well.[24]

The thought this pushes me towards is what will occupy us in this section. I introduce two concepts that will allow us a novel answer to the impact question. The first is the idea of projects. Projects are characterised by their aims. In attempting to achieve some epistemic

[23] Some objectors to RME argue that endorsing RME on beliefs requires endorsing RME on credences. The objector then argues that RME on credences is deeply implausible and so insists that RME on beliefs must also be rejected. See (Enoch and Spectre, Forthcoming. 5-9). If true, this would count in favour of developing an alternative view. However, the case is not straightforward. (Johnson King & Babic, 2020), for instance, build a picture which makes RME on credences quite plausible.

[24] Another possible reason to fulfil these expectations is because it will often be what is morally required. I could see this giving rise to a moral alternative answer to the impact question, although I will not explore that here. One advantage for my answer to the impact question is that, by keeping moral claims minimal, I avoid begging questions about the extent that morality makes demands on our interpersonal or epistemic lives.

goal, for instance, I thereby engage in an epistemic project. Epistemic projects will be contrasted against interpersonal projects.

The second concept is project-relative rationality. I contend that the standards for assessing whether or not a given attitude or action is rational are set by the project in which it is held or taken. What it is to be epistemically rational is not what it is to be interpersonally rational. A belief might be epistemically rational while failing to be interpersonally rational and vice versa. The existence of interpersonal rationality provides the answer to the impact question. Doxastic wrongs impact what you ought to believe because their existence influences what is interpersonally rational.

In 4.4, I define and motivate the existence of projects. I discuss projects which are both epistemic and interpersonal, purely epistemic, and purely interpersonal. I then offer some clarification regarding our agency over the projects we engage in and defend the possibility of purely interpersonal projects against truth as the constitutive evaluative measure of belief. The contrasting senses of rationality are then derived in 4.5. Defending, clarifying, and motivating interpersonal rationality will be the main task in the remainder of this thesis.

4.4 Epistemic and Interpersonal Projects

Start by considering that at least one way in which an act is to be assessed is in relation to the end it was enacted to serve. If I purchase a copy of Scientific American to keep myself up to date with recent scientific developments, then that act can be assessed as going well if it genuinely leads me to learn of those developments. If I learn nothing and merely convince those around me that I am scientifically well informed, then we will have good grounds for

saying my action has failed. Conversely, if I had made that same purchase with the end of appearing erudite when I read it in front of my friends then we can assess the act as having gone well if I have my desired effect. If I instead coincidentally learn something and change no one's mind regarding my scientific knowledge, then the act will have gone poorly in an important sense.[25]

What distinguishes the two cases is the character of the ends that the purchase is made for. In the former case my end is epistemic, I am attempting to acquire true beliefs. When our ends are epistemic in nature then I understand the acts done in service of that end to be part of an *epistemic project*.[26] Epistemic projects are attempts to learn something about the world. When assessing an act as part of an epistemic project we can ask questions like "was the act conducive to acquiring good or relevant evidence?" or "did the act lead to true beliefs on the desired topic?". An act does well as part of an epistemic project when we answer those questions affirmatively and does poorly if these questions are answered negatively, even if they bring about other, non-epistemic goods.

Thankfully, not all our ends are epistemic in nature, sometimes our ends are interpersonal, as in the latter case. An end is interpersonal just when it is in service of our relationships with others, I understand acts done in service of such ends to be part of *interpersonal projects*. Interpersonal projects are attempts to strengthen our relationships with others. Attempting to maintain or strengthen a friendship is a paradigmatic interpersonal project. Just as we can

---

[25] Learning may be good regardless of whether or not I intend to learn, but that does not entail that there is no sense in which the act was a failure.

[26] Readers might prefer to think of epistemic projects and epistemic rationality to be about knowledge rather than truth. I elect to talk in terms of truth, but nothing will hinge on that decision.

assess an act as part of an epistemic project, we can also assess it as part of an interpersonal project and doing so generates its own set of distinct questions. We can ask questions like "did the act satisfy the expectations of the friend?" or "did the act increase the friend's trust in the actor?". Acts that are affirmatively assessed on these sorts of questions do well as part of interpersonal projects.

The important thing to note here is that to say that an act did well epistemically need not imply anything about how it did interpersonally or vice versa. Sometimes these things will converge. I strengthen my relationships with my friends at least in part by acting in such a way as to learn important details about them. Oftentimes, however, the fact that carrying out a particular action will strengthen a relationship and therefore be good interpersonally tells you nothing about whether or not that act will further any particular epistemic project.

That in itself should not be all that surprising, sometimes the interpersonal and the epistemic are not all that related to one another. The more controversial point that I will push in the remainder of this section, the point I take to be implied by the results of Strawsonian epistemology, is that just as acts can be assessed in virtue of their epistemic and interpersonal purposes, so too can doxastic attitudes. Naturally, as truth-tracking attitudes, doxastic attitudes have a role to play in epistemic projects. I contend that epistemic projects do not exhaust the purposes of our doxastic attitudes, however. The fact that there are legitimate expectations on doxastic attitudes tells us that those attitudes have a role to play in our social lives; they may be evaluated in virtue of how well they play that role i.e. in virtue of their place in an interpersonal project.

In the remainder of the section, I will argue for the claim that there are beliefs that can be assessed interpersonally. I will do this first by showing that there are projects that are both interpersonal and epistemic in nature and projects that are purely epistemic. In both cases, what you believe can play a role in the project's success. I will then argue that there are projects that are purely interpersonal in which your success can depend on what you believe. That we can assess a belief interpersonally will allow me to build a notion of interpersonal rationality that can give an answer to the impact question: doxastic wrongs impact what you ought to believe because they impact what is interpersonally rational.

4.4.1 Three Types of Projects

Oftentimes, what is good to believe interpersonally and what is good to believe epistemically is the same. A doctor attempting to diagnose a patient engages in an epistemic and interpersonal project. They aim to collect and evaluate all the available evidence so that they may infer what the patient is suffering from and choose a treatment. This process aims at truth and is therefore an epistemic project. However, the doctor, in virtue of the relationship they stand in to their patient, is also engaged in an interpersonal project. They are also concerned with forming attitudes that best respect their patient. The nature of the relationship is that aiming at truth is how that respect is achieved, thus they are appropriately evaluated as engaging in both an epistemic and interpersonal project.

Sometimes, a belief will have no relevance to an agent's interpersonal ends and so should only be evaluated in virtue of its place in an epistemic project. Engaging in a crossword by oneself might be thought of as a purely epistemic project. Here, I aim to infer from my available evidence the true answers to the puzzle and thus my project is epistemic. It will not,

however, be an interpersonal project in so far as my engaging with the puzzle does not concern anyone else.

As we will see, it is important for my view that there be beliefs that are appropriately evaluated as being part of a *purely interpersonal* project. To show that such beliefs exist, I will start by considering a project that is clearly interpersonal. I will then argue that little hinges on whether or not the belief you form is true and so the project is not epistemic. We will therefore have a case of a purely interpersonal project. (Keller, 2004b) considers the case of a friend who invites you to a poetry open mic that they are taking part in. In this case you are not familiar with your friend's poetry, you have no evidence that bears directly on their skills as a poet, but you have found that the quality of poetry presented at the open mic where your friend will recite is invariably poor in quality.

I take the belief formed about your friend's poetry to be part of an interpersonal project, part of the wider interpersonal project of being a good friend. It is interpersonal because it matters to your friend what you believe. Plausibly your friend will desire that you believe their poetry will be something worth going to see.[27] It is easy to imagine that your friend would be hurt should they find out that you did not think their poetry would be worth attending the open mic for. Indeed, your friend's desire may even amount to a legitimate expectation that you have faith in their abilities. In that case it matters, interpersonally, that you come to believe that their poetry will be good, especially if your failure to do so will wrong your friend.

[27] Only plausibly because your friend could want any number of things here. Perhaps they only want you to keep an open mind or maybe they hope you underestimate them because they would enjoy proving you wrong. That your friend could reasonably want you to believe what is best supported by your evidence is perfectly compatible with my overall point that, in some cases, your friend's desires dictate what is interpersonally rational for you to do.

It would be inappropriate, I think, to evaluate the belief as part of an epistemic project. This is because accurately tracking the quality of your friend's poetry is not a valuable end in this circumstance. For one thing, what your friend desires regarding what you think of their poetry is invariant to the quality of the poetry. If it benefits you interpersonally to believe that their poetry is good, then you will garner that benefit regardless of whether or not the belief is true. Additionally, there appears to be nothing at stake, outside of the interpersonal, to make accuracy a worthy end. There are no million-dollar questions or poetry-obsessed gunmen to give your accurate tracking of your friend's poetry prowess practical importance. There is only the interpersonally valuable task of respecting your friend.

There are ways that this case could have involved relevant epistemic ends. It could have been of practical importance that you make a good prediction about your friend's poetry. Your friend could have desired differently, they may have wanted you to believe only what your evidence entailed because they would find anything else patronising.[28] Indeed, the case may change midway through the process, another friend relying on your expertise in poetry may want your accurate judgement, thereby making the belief play a pertinent role in an epistemic project. All of this is perfectly compatible with there being some scenarios where it is true that the only thing at stake against which your belief should be judged is the interpersonal aim of respect.

Additionally, the existence of this sort of purely interpersonal project is implied more broadly by the frequent need to treat people in the participant stance rather than the objective. If it were the case that we always best served our interpersonal goals by aiming at the truth, then it is not clear why it could ever really be objectionable to hold people in the objective stance.

[28] For more on this kind of thought see 6.4.

By treating people as merely objects to be predicted, we put ourselves in the best position to make accurate predictions regarding them given that we concern ourselves only with truth-apt reasons. That is, we put ourselves in the best position to determine what is true. That it could be objectionable to take the objective stance therefore implies that aiming only at truth can sometimes fail to be a legitimate social aim, indicating that we may engage in non-epistemic interpersonal projects.

One worry you could have with demarcating projects in this way is that even purely interpersonal projects will require accurate truth tracking at some point. If I want to support my friends' poetry, then I will need to know, among other things, how to get to the open mic, when they are performing, etc. In aiming to know these things I seem to be engaging in an epistemic project. It might then begin to look like my prime example of a purely interpersonal project is, at best, a joint one.

To answer this concern, we need only get clear on how projects relate to one another. Consider the project of writing a thesis. Plausibly, this is a purely epistemic project, given the aim is to further our collective knowledge. In completing this project, there are sub projects that will need to be completed along the way. Many of these sub projects will also be purely epistemic in nature (doing the readings, writing, etc.) but not all. If I want to make it to the other end of the thesis writing project, I will need to maintain my support network and in doing so engage in some interpersonal projects. It would be a mistake, however, to insist that this implies thesis writing is anything other than a purely epistemic project.[29] Rather, it is

[29] Thinking of projects in this way implies the possibility of being really fine-grained. If I have a project of reading a paper, does that project come with a huge number of subprojects where the aim is to read each individual word? I am not necessarily opposed to this result. I would suggest, however, that these indivisible subprojects will turn out to not be all that interesting.

possible (and indeed, helpful) to separate these projects out, to see how they relate to one another, and to think about their nature as individual projects.

4.4.2 Agency Over Projects

I hope to have convinced you that there are such things as projects and that they can be divided into distinct categories. Further, it should be clear that beliefs, and not just actions, can be appropriately evaluated as part of projects. I do not intend the categories discussed here to be exhaustive, there may be, for instance, such a thing as an *intra*personal project. However, the three categories laid out above (epistemic, interpersonal, and joint) will be sufficient for our purposes going forward. Before deriving distinct notions of project-relative rationality, I want to offer some clarification over what it takes to be engaged in a project and the extent to which this is something we can control. I will then give a brief defence against the idea that it is constitutive of beliefs that they be evaluated as part of epistemic projects.

Suppose the both of us buy into the notion of projects as outlined here, and later we come into some disagreement regarding a belief I have. The disagreement hinges on the type of project which the belief was pertinent to. You think the belief should be assessed as part of an epistemic project, while I maintain it was part of an interpersonal one. As it happens, the belief does well when assessed as part of an interpersonal project but poorly if assessed as part of an epistemic one. Take this as a sketch of a type of argument that might be had if projects exist as I have described. What follows are some considerations regarding projects that could bear on these types of arguments. In offering these considerations I hope to make clearer the type of control we have over the projects we engage in.

Given that projects are defined by their goals, agents will naturally have some control over the kinds of projects in which they engage via their intentions. Many of the interpersonal projects that I have are a direct result of my intentions regarding who I want to be friends with. We have different interpersonal projects, in part, because we intend to further our social ends with different people. This point extends likewise to epistemic projects. The epistemic projects that I am engaged in are different from that of a physicist, at least in part because I intend to study philosophy while they intend to study physics. One way I might seek to resolve our disagreement, then, is to insist that the aims I had intended to pursue are interpersonal in nature.

If I rely on the premise that I intended to pursue an interpersonal project, then there are at least two ways you might wish to respond. One is to argue that my intentions are misguided. Just because I engaged in a particular project does not mean I ought to have engaged in that project. Perhaps our disagreement pertains to a relationship that you disapprove of. I intend to further my relationship with this person, thereby engaging in an interpersonal project. You, on the other hand, think this is misguided, and that I ought to be treating things as an epistemic project. If you are right, then there is still a sense in which my belief is apt for criticism, given it should have been formed in service of an epistemic project.

The second line of response you could offer me is to insist that I have made a mistake over the nature of the project that I am engaged in. Suppose my goal was to solve the morning's crossword. As you will correctly point out, solving the crossword is an epistemic project. Yet, I may have badly misunderstood what kind of aim solving the crossword is and so view it as an exercise in furthering social relations. Perhaps I aim to believe whatever is most pleasing to those around me regarding the solution. Clearly, this would be a misunderstanding of what

my goal of solving the crossword involves. It would therefore be inappropriate to insist on judging my belief regarding the crossword on interpersonal standards given that in aiming to solve it my project was epistemic.

That then, is some ways that disagreements around projects could go. We control which projects we engage in via our intentions. This leaves open the possibility that we might intend to engage in an objectionable project or misunderstand what sort of project our intentions entail. We will now turn to another move you might make in our disagreement based on the idea that, in forming a belief, we are automatically engaging in an epistemic project.

4.4.3 Against Truth as the Constitutive Evaluative Measure of Belief

A feature of purely interpersonal projects that should be clear at this point is that they are low stakes as regards to truth. It does not matter, in terms of evaluation, if a belief formed in service of a purely interpersonal project is true. Some may find this automatically objectionable on the basis that the constitutive evaluative measure of a belief is whether or not it is true, i.e. the view that settling the truth value of a belief, is sufficient for settling whether or not it is good. Someone who held this view would be inclined to reject the evaluation of belief as part of a purely interpersonal project, contending that any project in which belief is relevant is ipso facto an epistemic one. I reject this point but will not contest it at length here. I note only that viewing truth as the constitutive evaluative measure of belief is at odds with the apparent existence of useless or harmful beliefs.[30] The constitutive evaluative measure is therefore a controversial view which any opponent of mine will not be at liberty to assume.

[30] See (Hazlett, 2013) for a book length discussion on the value of true beliefs. The issue of useless or harmful true beliefs are discussed throughout.

Suppose it took my neighbour 5621 brushstrokes to paint their kitchen. If I happen to form a belief on the matter, is that belief any better or worse if I happen to believe that the number is 5620 brushstrokes rather than 5621? Proponents of the constitutive claim will want to say yes, it is worse in virtue of being false, but this is surely a substantive stance that we should not take for granted. For one thing, nothing, of practical importance, hangs on my ability to get the number correct. I am not going to be painting my neighbour's kitchen, and they are not going to be consulting me on the matter. The belief might have been of practical importance if these things were otherwise, but the defender of the constitutive claim could not rely on that point. It could have just as easily been of practical importance that I hold the false belief.

Additionally, you might think that saying my false belief is worse implies that I ought to gather the information to form the true belief. This is not conceptually ruled out but clearly there is a lot that counts against gathering that evidence. It would both take a lot of time and be potentially intrusive for me to investigate my neighbour's home in this way. If there is something that counts in favour of my taking those steps, then we are owed an explanation of what exactly that is. Why think that “truth” could make it worth the effort?

Beyond useless beliefs, there are also harmful ones. Suppose I am a bad philosopher and that, if I believe that, then it will cause me much mental distress and hinder my ability to improve. Clearly, a lot counts in favour of my believing that my philosophical abilities are at least average. It will save me a lot of pain and make it more likely that I will come to no longer be a bad philosopher. Yet the proponent of the constitutive claim must hold that my belief would be better if it were true. Again, this is not an impossibility, perhaps my belief would be better

if it were true. However, in coming to believe truly that I am a bad philosopher I will incur clear costs. Note that these costs are not merely practical. If I ensure that I continue to be poor at philosophy, then there will also be epistemic penalties associated with continuing to do bad philosophy. This goes against the constitutive view being able to appeal to epistemic value.

This is not meant as a straightforward rejection of the constitutive view. I merely aim to have shown that it should be understood as controversial. It is not a view that an opponent of purely interpersonal projects can assume. The remainder of this work will assume the falsity of the constitutive view, truth is merely one way in which beliefs are to be normatively evaluated.

4.5 Deriving Epistemic and Interpersonal Rationality

If we allow, then, that there is a good prima facie case for thinking that such purely interpersonal projects exist, that is cases where the value of what you believe is not to be judged in epistemic terms, then we can have an alternate account of how the existence of doxastic wrongs bear on what attitudes we ought to form. The preceding discussion has shown that interpersonal projects need not be epistemic in nature. That is, achieving our social ends is not always best served by aiming at truth. What this motivates is the thought that for these non-epistemic interpersonal projects, there is a distinct kind of rationality at play, one that is interpersonal, rather than epistemic.[31] In recognising this distinct notion of

[31] This idea of an interpersonal rationality is reminiscent of the social rationality discussed by (Railton, 1986). I intend the concept of interpersonal rationality to be distinct in that it need not be a moral concept.

interpersonal rationality, the doxastic wrong theorist thereby gains their answer to the impact question without making any claims regarding what epistemic rationality amounts to.

Interpersonal projects are those that further social ends, that being the case, an attitude or action is *interpersonally rational* in so far as it is the type of attitude or action that is conducive to furthering social ends.[32] This is to be contrasted against epistemic rationality, where an attitude or action is epistemically rational so far as it is conducive to furthering epistemic ends.[33] While it might be unclear how doxastic wrongs could influence what is epistemically rational, it should be clear how they would bear on what is interpersonally rational. Afterall, wronging others will typically be antithetical to the success of interpersonal projects.

Here we have a fuller picture of what the doxastic wrong theorist ought to say about a case like RAP. There, it is not just the case that I ought to apologise, but also that I have done something irrational. If we viewed my doxastic attitude as part of an epistemic project, then this irrationality would have been puzzling. The important step is recognising that my

---

[32] This, admittedly, is a very brief gloss. In the following sections, I aim to make the nature of interpersonal rationality clearer by way of clarification and response to objection. One thing I will not be able to offer are necessary and sufficient conditions regarding what it is to be interpersonally rational. To do this would require a full account of what it is to excel in interpersonal projects, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. The aim, instead, is to show that such a notion of interpersonal rationality exists and that it can do work in areas across social epistemology.

[33] As mentioned in Fn 26, I think of epistemic ends in terms of truth. Note that an attitude being conducive to furthering epistemic ends is not equivalent to simply holding true beliefs. If my method of reasoning is seriously flawed, I may still get lucky and come to believe truly. In such a case there is still an important sense in which that belief is epistemically irrational. It can still be assessed as doing poorly as part of an epistemic project. Throughout the thesis, I tacitly assume an evidentialist account of what epistemic rationality amount (one's belief is epistemically rational so long as it is adequately supported by the evidence) but strictly you can substitute in any account you prefer. Evidentialism has many defenders. For a classic example see (Clifford, 1877), for a contemporary defence see (Shah, 2006).

irrationality is a consequence of my project being interpersonal rather than epistemic in character. This will permit violations of No Conflicts, I may genuinely be doing well epistemically. Maintaining that I am rational by epistemic lights, however, will do little more than indicate confusion about what standards are relevant. It will be no excuse against my partner's grievances.

5.1 Understanding Interpersonal Rationality

The preceding sections, if successful, build a comprehensive picture of doxastic wrongs, explaining both how they function and their normative influence on our doxastic attitudes. In explaining the normative influence, I have appealed to the idea of interpersonal rationality as something distinct from epistemic rationality. This will do little good, however, if interpersonal rationality is not normatively relevant or if appealing to it commits me to some other implausible claim. In this section, I want to defend the normative significance of interpersonal rationality, explore its limits, and clarify what exactly the doxastic wrongs theorist need commit to by appealing to it. Regarding the first task, in 5.2 I demonstrate why we should think interpersonal rationality is normatively significant. Regarding the latter two tasks, in 5.3 I start with showing that an appeal to interpersonal rationality need not result in the sort of strong pragmatism defended by (Rinard, 2019). I then close by considering the relationship between interpersonal and epistemic rationality, drawing on the conclusions of (Keller, 2004b) and (Stroud, 2006) regarding epistemic partiality. In contrasting interpersonal rationality against epistemic rationality, I hope to make interpersonal rationality's nature clearer. We will then move on to considering more concrete objections to the possibility of interpersonal rationality.

5.2 The Normative Significance of Interpersonal Rationality

One worry that might be had with an appeal to non-epistemic rationality is that it would fail to carry the sort of normative weight that the doxastic wrong theorist requires.[34] That is, it might be that doxastic wrongs bear on what you interpersonally ought to believe, but that just is not an ought with significance. Strictly, we might construct a notion of rationality relative to any given activity. In the domain of comedy, for instance, an assertion might be considered comedically rational in so far as it is apt to cause laughter. It is unlikely to be the case, however, that failing to be comedically rational is the sort of thing that makes one apt for criticism in and of itself. It might be that the standards of morality could circumstantially call for us to be comedically rational. I am thinking here of the sort of moral responsibility a comedian might have to themselves to do well in their craft. The normative significance, in that instance, would still be meaningfully external from the standards of comedy themselves.

Interpersonal rationality is not like this, it is not merely some constructed rationality with no normative weight. This should be clear because interpersonal rationality is precisely the sort of rationality required for successful social ends. Humans, as social agents, cannot help but be concerned with the task of maintaining good relationships; interpersonal rationality is inescapably relevant in a way that something like comedic rationality is not. One way to make the normative relevance of this point clear would be to ask why epistemic rationality is normatively significant in a way that comedic rationality is not. The answer will presumably make some reference to the near universal interest in having attitudes that accurately track

[34] When I talk of a rationality having the proper "normative weight", I mean that its standards are robustly normative in the (McPherson, 2011) sense. Rationalities that lack this weight may still have standards that are formally normative.

what is true about the world. In just the same way, in so far as we must be concerned with our interpersonal projects and in so far as those projects require us to form certain doxastic attitudes, having doxastic attitudes that are interpersonally rational will be of normative importance.

It might be suggested at this point that things are still not significantly different from the comedy example; it just happens to be the case that we all have morally significant social ends while far fewer of us have morally significant comedic ones. If one wants to insist that the importance of interpersonal rationality will turn out to be grounded in some important moral standards, then they are free to do so, but this will not in itself undermine the normative importance of interpersonal rationality. It may still, very plausibly, be the case that many of our relationships are morally significant. So long as this is so, interpersonal rationality will be normatively significant.

5.3 Interpersonal Rationality versus Epistemic Rationality

If the doxastic wrong theorist can make meaningful and legitimate appeals to a distinctly non-epistemic form of rationality, then there is an important outstanding question: what is the theory's stance towards epistemic rationality? This is the goal of the section. My aim is to get clear both on what commitments are made regarding the status of epistemic rationality and what the implications might be for conflicts between the two standards. In the end, I believe the doxastic wrong theorist is permitted a certain degree of conservatism regarding epistemic rationality. Indeed, it may be more conservative than some theorists are after. That is okay, the goal here is to explore the minimal set of commitments that the theorist takes on. Those that wish to rock the boat further are welcome to.

When I say that there is a permitted degree of conservatism, I mean that the doxastic wrong theorist need not commit to something like strong pragmatism regarding what one ought to believe. Take (Rinard, 2019) as a strong pragmatist position, where questions about what doxastic attitudes one ought to form are settled in precisely the same way that one would settle what one ought to do.[35] On this view, there is nothing particularly normatively relevant about an evidentialist understanding of epistemic rationality, where a belief is rational in so far as it is best supported by the evidence. Rinard allows that one may construct up a notion of epistemic rationality and track whether we meet its standards, but doing so will not be guidance giving (ibid. 1934-1939). Times where you ought to believe what is epistemically rational will only be those times where what you ought to do happens to also be epistemically rational.

This is a relatively extreme view, and one that is compatible with the picture of doxastic wronging built in this paper. The fit would be fairly natural where the possibility of doxastic wrongs generates moral reasons that bear on what one ought to believe just as moral reason might bear on what one ought to do. What I would stress, however, is that the theory of doxastic wrongs I have defended need not be partnered with such a view, it is also compatible with a more moderate type of pragmatism about belief that preserves some importance for epistemic rationality. I am thinking here of a view where the normative standards for rational doxastic attitudes are properly relative to the project that the doxastic attitude is part of. So epistemic rationality has normative force when the doxastic attitude being formed is part of an epistemic project. In a case like RAP, I might maintain that I am being epistemically

[35] (Rinard 2019. 1924) refers to this as the equal treatment view.

rational, but, in this instance, epistemic rationality is not normative given my project is interpersonal rather than epistemic. On the other hand, in cases of epistemic projects, like that of the doctor or the crossword-solver, agents can be normatively judged by the standards of epistemic rationality. On this view, epistemic rationality plays a diminished, but not eliminated, role in determining what we ought to believe.[36]

If the doxastic wrong theorist does go for this sort of modest view, then they will owe some explanation as to the conflict between the competing standards of rationality. What do we say when a belief is epistemically impeccable yet interpersonally flawed? This question echoes discussions in the epistemic partiality literature, notably (Keller, 2004b) and (Stroud, 2006). Both writers observe and develop the notion that doing well by our friends requires us to be epistemically partial, that is, reason in ways that fail to meet the standards of epistemic rationality.

Take the following as emblematic of a case of partiality. A close friend of mine recently sat a law exam and is awaiting the results. They think they have failed the exam. While they put in many hours of preparation, it has transpired (so they claim) that the method of preparation was inappropriate for passing the exam. Additionally, past experience has shown that my friend is good at predicting their results, and their classmates have also reported expected failure due to bad preparation methods.

[36] See (Worsnip, 2021) for scepticism regarding moderate pragmatism. I take myself to be committed to some form of pragmatism, even if the moderate form discussed here is ultimately unstable.

Despite all this, I cannot help but believe that my friend has passed, and I feel my friend would rightly complain if I had done anything else. However, if I were to transmit all my evidence to a disinterested third party, I would be surprised if that third party believed in anything other than my friend's impending failure, and I certainly cannot see my friend complaining in the same way to this third party. Notably, it is only my friend that I have this positive belief for. I believe that their compatriots, who I do not know, will fail, even though I have every reason to believe that they prepared just as much.[37]

My evidence regarding my friend's situation is no different than my evidence regarding their cohort. Therefore, in believing better of my friend than the rest, I fail to meet the standards of epistemic rationality and exhibit doxastic partiality. Further, my engaging in partiality is not merely idle. When I believe in my friend, I take myself to be satisfying some demand that my friend has on me to reason about them partially. The question, then, is what to say about the situations where an agent is moved to be seemingly epistemically irrational by the demands of good friendship. This can be reframed for our current purposes where "the demands of good friendship" is read as "the demands of interpersonal rationality".

Stroud notes three ways that we might respond to this sort of conflict.[38] There is the irreconcilability type response where we admit of a conflict but hold that it cannot be resolved. For instance, when a belief is irrational interpersonally yet rational epistemically, there is no "all things considered" view of what one ought to believe. In section 3 we saw that

[37] Since the time of writing, I can confirm that my friend did pass their exams. Well done Alasdair!

[38] (Stroud, 2006. 518-524) ultimately Stroud does not endorse any option, but she devotes most of her attention to the idea that we should reconsider our views on what is epistemically rational.

avoiding this type of response has driven doxastic wrong theorists to endorse RME and preserve a No Conflicts principle. That move reflects Stroud's second response. On this response the apparent inconsistencies indicate that we should reconsider what epistemic rationality is about; perhaps it should be sensitive to the demands of good friendship. RME would be one way to get this result, but as we have discussed, there are good reasons for doxastic wrong theorists to consider other options. In any case, the motivation for this reconciliation between rationalities is significantly lessened if we go for a view where doxastic attitudes do more than just further epistemic projects which the existence of purely interpersonal projects indicates.

It is the third option from Stroud that I think is most promising: the view where conflicts between the demands of our interpersonal lives and the demands of epistemic rationality tell us that epistemic rationality can fail to hold sway in the domain of friendship. This is the modest type of pragmatism that I have been pushing and is the sort of view endorsed by Keller.[39] In regards to what to say about conflicts between the two types of rationality, Keller notes that we will sometimes be able to extract moral obligations to adhere to one standard over the other. They use an example where adhering to interpersonal rationality would foster a good relationship, while promoting doxastic attitudes that are less accurate but where the inaccuracy is ultimately harmless. A moral obligation to be interpersonally rational thus emerges out of the presumed moral value of good relationships. Importantly, we can supplement this view with cases where there is a moral reason to be epistemically rather than interpersonally rational. I think something like this forms part of the explanation as to why it is permissible for victims of gaslighting to start reasoning objectively about their abusers. In

[39] (Keller, 2004b. 348-351)

these situations, it is clear that a focus on adhering to the standards of interpersonal rationality and risking less accurate beliefs may perpetuate the harm that is done to them. This is a moral reason to be epistemically rational.

Another reason this position fits particularly nicely with the existence of doxastic wrongs is that doxastic wrongs inform how we ought to resolve these conflicts. That adhering to epistemic rationality risks doxastically wronging someone should count against adhering to that standard and equally if following interpersonal rationality avoids doxastic wronging, then that is a reason to prefer interpersonal rationality. Doxastic wrongs therefore help explain why it is that epistemic rationality could hold less normative importance in the domain of friendship. On this view, the relationship between what is epistemically rational and doxastic wrongs is not one of encroachment, rather, the potential for doxastic wrongs bears on whether or not being epistemically rational is normatively required.

To close, I do want to highlight that in the conflicts between these two standards there are a class of cases where epistemic rationality will win out for practical reasons. Here, the objector might insist that there are surely situations where the evidence is such that we cannot help but believe a certain way. The thought being that even if evidence is not the only thing that we are sensitive to when forming doxastic attitudes, it will surely still be one of the main things we are sensitive to. One could run a case like RAP where in addition to smelling of wine my partner comes stumbling through the door with an open bottle in hand. I may not want to believe that they have relapsed, but at some point the evidence will be too much to ignore.

It should be clear that there are situations in which we lack the control to believe anything other than what the evidence implies. Specifically, when we appreciate that some evidence strongly indicates a particular conclusion. What is important about the overwhelming evidence cases is that they represent the limits of the requirements of interpersonal rationality rather than a general rejection of them. Sometimes taking the interpersonally rational attitudes will be so epistemically irrational as to be impossible, in those cases there is not a good sense in which we ought to be interpersonally rational.

6.1 Objection from Self-Denial[40]

The previous section's aim was to elaborate further on what appealing to a concept of interpersonal rationality entails. We now turn to possible objections that could be made against such a move. One might object to the idea that we could reason in a distinctly interpersonal way in the following fashion. Suppose I take my own advice and start reasoning about my friends interpersonally rather than (purely) epistemically. I hold them in the participant stance and accept their intentions as warranting belief in their success and so on. This reasoning, by stipulation, may fail to be truth conducive, given it is aimed at the interpersonally best belief or action, rather than the truth. After all, that is what distinguishes it from reasoning epistemically. However, if I understand myself to be reasoning interpersonally rather than epistemically then I will know that my reasoning is not (maximally) truth-conducive. That would appear to give rise to an important question: how could this type of reasoning move me to believe anything if I recognise it as not truth conducive?

[40] Objection raised by Sanford Goldberg based on (Hieronymi, 2005) and (Hieronymi, 2006)

Answering this question will be the goal of this section. The aim is to show that there is an important sense in which interpersonal reasoning can be desirable, warranted, or best, while accepting and squaring it with the idea that it lacks the truth-oriented aims of epistemic reasoning. In 6.2, I present the notion that there is such a thing as a "wrong kind of reason" and what that amounts to regarding belief. This gives rise to two kinds of objections, one descriptive, and one normative. In 6.3, I consider how both of these objections may be applied to interpersonal reasoning. I then answer the normative objection by way of appeal to project-relative rationality. In answering the descriptive objection we are faced with a further objection: the objection from self-denial. 6.4 aims to answer the objection from self-denial by further elaborating on what it means to engage in interpersonal reasoning and via appeal to a notion of self-reflective endorsement.

6.2 The Wrong Kind of Reason

This issue relates to a wider question of identifying what sort of reasons can be the right reasons for belief. To say that a reason is a reason of the right kind for belief-P is to say that it is the sort of reason that could *properly* move you to believe P. I say "Properly" because any reason which appears to be a reason of the right kind can move us to believe even when it is the wrong type of reason. A reason is of the wrong type just when, in fully appreciating the relationship between the reason and belief-P, we would see that the reason did not bear on the truth of P.[41] So it may be that you ask me if the train is going to be delayed and I come to

[41] It is worth noting some controversy on this point. (Schroeder, 2012), among others, argues for a narrowing of the scope regarding reasons of the wrong kind. He notes examples where you have reason to believe that you will receive good evidence at a later point, which will resolve for you the question you are currently deliberating. This current evidence that you will receive decisive evidence later is a reason to withhold belief, so the claim goes. However, it will turn out to be a reason of the wrong kind on Hieronymi's view. In any case, even if we ought to narrow the scope of what counts as the wrong kind of reason, it will become clear that the cases of interpersonal reasoning under discussion and the

believe that it will be on the basis of my not getting to drink any coffee that morning (such is my negative disposition). Barring some hitherto undiscovered connection between my coffee consumption and the running of the trains, the reason "I did not drink coffee this morning" is the wrong kind of reason for believing "the train will be delayed", even if it is genuinely the reason on which I formed the belief.[42]

The objector in this section will maintain that interpersonal reasons are reasons of the wrong kind for belief. In order to see why, we should be more precise about the distinction between right/wrong reasons for belief. We will start by clarifying both "reasons" and "beliefs" by following (Hieronymi, 2005). Hieronymi understands reasons as "considerations which bear on a question". That the train drivers are striking is a reason because it is a consideration which bears on the question of whether or not the train will be delayed.

Beliefs, on Hieronymi's view, are "commitment-constituted attitudes", so called because a belief is constituted by one's commitment to the truth of the believed proposition. So I believe that the train will be delayed just when I am committed to the truth of the proposition "the train will be delayed". There are various ways one might think about what this commitment amounts to. I think of the commitment in terms of action or belief focussed reasoning. One is committed to the truth of a proposition if one will treat it as true when

---

corresponding interpersonal reasons fall outside that narrower scope. More generally, it would not be surprising for any given interpersonal reason to fall out that scope given they are often positive reasons to believe rather than reasons to withhold belief. Finally, following purely interpersonal reasons will straightforwardly lead one to do worse epistemically which could reasonably be taken as the hallmark of a reason of the wrong kind.

[42] This implies a second "explanatory" sense of reasons which are just the reasons for which a particular agent believes what they believe. You might then derive another way that reasons could be right or wrong on this axis, where a reason is of the wrong kind if it does not form part of the explanation for the agent's belief. That the train driver was ill this morning is the wrong reason for my belief just when it is not part of the explanation of why I formed the belief. I will set aside this sense of right or wrong going forward.

reasoning about how to act or what to believe in the cases where the proposition is relevant. The issue of commitment is undoubtedly more complicated than that but the motivating thought for the position is hopefully clear. When determining what to do or believe, it is the truths that we are really committed to, the things we actually believe, that will guide us.

With this view of beliefs and reasons, we can derive two distinct types of reason for belief: constitutive and extrinsic. Constitutive reasons, in general, are the types of reasons that bear directly on the content of a commitment which constitutes a given attitude. A constitutive reason for belief-P, therefore, is any reason which bears on the question "is P true?", given that committing to an answer of that question entails coming to believe/disbelieve P. That the train drivers are striking is a constitutive reason to believe that the train will be delayed. Extrinsic reasons are any reasons which bear on forming the attitude without bearing on questions which, if answered, would settle the attitude's constitutive commitment(s). For beliefs, extrinsic reasons are reasons which bear on questions pertinent to believing without bearing on the question of whether or not the believed proposition is true. The most obvious extrinsic reasons for belief will be reasons which bear on questions regarding the utility of the belief. If believing that the trains will be delayed will spur me to make alternate plans and avoid disruption, then that is an extrinsic reason to believe that the trains will be delayed. However, it is not constitutive because it does not bear on the actual running of the trains.[43]

While some will have issue with these characterisations of reasons and belief, the framework is useful for grasping why exactly some reasons are of the right or wrong kind for belief. The intuition will be that constitutive reasons are reasons of the right kind, while extrinsic reasons

[43] Extrinsic reasons for one belief can be restated as constitutive reasons for another belief. That it would save me pain to believe that the trains will be delayed is a constitutive reason for believing that it would be *good* to believe that the trains would be delayed.

will be reasons of the wrong kind. We can give a little more to motivate this idea. Hieronymi thinks of the problem in terms of answerability (ibid. 449-451). When we form a belief and thereby commit ourselves to the truth of a proposition, we are answerable to certain questions about that commitment, questions relating to the truth of the proposition, which only constitutive reasons for the belief could answer. If I believe the train is going to be delayed, you can ask me why it is that I have that belief, and the only satisfactory responses to that challenge will be evidence that the train will, in fact, be delayed. If I provide only extrinsic reasons for my belief, for instance, by responding to your challenge by insisting that the belief is useful, then you will be well within your rights to ask, "but is it true?". You may then judge me to have failed to have properly answered your challenge if I provide no reasons relating to the truth of my belief. Constitutive reasons are reasons of the right kind because they can answer the challenges that one is answerable to in believing the proposition. Extrinsic reasons are of the wrong kind because they do not have this feature.

Notable, I think, is that I might respond to your challenge by insisting that my reasons do in fact bear on the truth of my belief. I might maintain, perhaps foolishly, that my missing coffee in the morning always correlates to the train not being there on time and so is an appropriate reason to believe. The important thing to see here is that the success of this response to the challenge hinges on whether or not my reason is genuinely constitutive. It is enough for this response to fail that you show that the reason is merely extrinsic, further implying that extrinsic reasons are reasons of the wrong kind.

When things are stated in terms of answerability, it implies that the wrong kind of reason problem is a normative issue, that reasoners are criticisable when they form beliefs on the basis of reasons of the wrong kind. I agree that there is a normative issue here, but it is worth

stressing the descriptive issue with which we started. Recall the initial gloss of wrong versus right reason suggested that what was at fault with reasons of the wrong kind is that, when we properly appreciate how the reason bears on the proposition, we cannot thereby be moved to believe on the basis of that reason. It is not just that believing upon wrong reasons would be bad epistemically, it is that doing so while seeing them as such is not a real possibility for agents like us.

To see why, start by noting what it takes to get oneself to believe a proposition. Because belief is constituted by a commitment to the truth of a proposition, it will not be enough to see the belief as useful or good, rather, one must see the proposition as true, i.e. actually be committed.[44] Resolving the question of whether P is true for oneself is both necessary and sufficient for believing P. There are multiple ways that this question can get resolved. Sometimes we may find that we have subconsciously come to see something as being the case, thereby discovering a belief. Equally, sometimes a blow to the back of the head really does change our commitments. When it comes to consciously resolving the question of whether P, the paradigmatic method is via reasoning. To resolve the question of whether P via reasoning one must consider reasons that bear on that question. Reasons of the wrong kind are extrinsic reasons, they do not bear on the question of whether P is true. To view a reason as a reason of the wrong kind, therefore, is to thereby prevent it from being able to settle the truth of P or form the basis for one's beliefs on the matter.

[44] You may have qualms with this conception of belief, but it will not be enough for me to reject the conception to avoid the ensuing objection. Rather, the problem will arise on any conception of belief that holds some intrinsic connection between believing P and taking/seeing/accepting P as true. Indeed, I suspect that any conception of belief worthy of the name will include such a connection and so generate the problem.

6.3 The Self-Denial Problem for Interpersonal Reasoning

Both the normative version of the wrong kind of reason problem (you are subject to criticism when you believe upon the wrong kind of reason) and the descriptive version (you cannot believe on the basis of a reason which you take to be of the wrong kind) present issues for interpersonal reasoning. To see why, start by noting that interpersonal reasons will clearly trend towards being extrinsic reasons for believing. An interpersonal reason for belief (in the Hieronymi sense of reason) is just a consideration that bears on a question pertaining to an interpersonal end. These are questions such as "does this belief constitute a doxastic wrong?" or "does this belief strengthen my relationship?". These reasons will tend to be extrinsic since answering the questions on which they bear will typically not lead to belief formation. In light of the discussion above, that interpersonal reasons tend to be extrinsic reasons implies that they will typically be the wrong type of reason for belief.

The objector pushing the normative version will argue that individuals who believe on the basis of interpersonal reasons while reasoning interpersonally are thereby opening themselves up to the criticism that these are reasons of the wrong kind. The delineation between epistemic and interpersonal projects allows for an answer to this version of the objection. Interpersonal reasons are often reasons of the wrong kind given they tend to not relate to truth, but with the language of projects in hand we can be more fine-grained than this. Interpersonal reasons are reasons of the wrong kind *in the context of epistemic projects*. When your aim is to believe true things, then you can be criticised for relying on an extrinsic reason, as they are not apt for achieving that aim. As the discussion of interpersonal projects aimed to show, however, the aim of your belief might be social in character rather than truth. If my belief has a social end, then I will presumably do better if I believe on the basis of

reasons that bear on those social ends. It does not seem to me to be enough, therefore, to point out that a belief is interpersonally based in order to criticise the believer. One must also show that the belief was formed (or should have been formed) as part of an epistemic project.

Properly embracing this response requires rejecting some of Hieronymi's framework for what makes a reason of the wrong kind for belief, at least normatively. It will no longer make sense to say that all extrinsic reasons for belief are reasons of the wrong kind. Instead, we must understand reasons being right or wrong in relation to the project that the belief is a part of. Reasons employed under purely epistemic projects can continue to be assessed in the terms Hieronymi laid out, but, in cases of purely interpersonal projects, we require a new criteria that does not deem interpersonal reasons automatically of the wrong kind. I will not endeavour to fully outline what it is to be a reason of the right or wrong kind in the context of purely interpersonal projects in this thesis.[45] However, given that the aim of this section is to respond to the objection that interpersonal reasons are reasons of the wrong kind for belief, it will be enough for our purposes to note that the charge is not true, normatively speaking, in strictly interpersonally pertinent contexts.

While I do believe this answers the normative variant of the wrong kind of reason problem, it will not help me in regards to the descriptive issue. This is because, while I contest Hieronymi's theory of why reasons may be of the wrong kind, I still broadly agree with her conception of belief. The descriptive problem will arise on any conception of belief where belief is constituted by a commitment to the truth of a proposition. As a result, we must

[45] The issue is, I expect, more complicated than interpersonal reasons being reasons of the right kind and epistemic reasons being reasons of the wrong kind. For one thing, an interpersonally best belief in a purely interpersonal project may also be true and in those instances I suspect epistemic reasons may be of the right kind.

disambiguate between the senses in which a reason can be of the wrong kind. There is the normative sense, where a reason is of the wrong kind when believing on the basis of that reason, in and of itself, opens one up to criticism that their belief is unjustified.[46] This is to be distinguished from a descriptive sense where a reason is of the wrong kind descriptively if, in understanding how the reason actually bears towards a proposition, human agents are unable to believe on the basis of that reason. It is this second sense of wrong reason which will occupy us and to which I will be referring for the rest of this section.

An objector pushing the descriptive objection may point out that, given that I concede that interpersonal reasons will tend to be extrinsic, i.e. reasons of the wrong kind descriptively, it would seem that an agent could not, in full consciousness, form a belief on the basis of an interpersonal reason. Yet it would be a fatal objection to my theory if it turned out that you never ought to reason interpersonally, because doing so would be impossible. In order for interpersonal rationality to work as an answer to the impact question, it must be a genuine option for us; it must be the case that we can reason and come to believe on the basis of interpersonal reasons. The wrong reason framework does allow for this; after all, our discussion started by noting that any reason can move us to believe *if we take it as a reason of the right kind.*

One takes a reason to be of the right kind when they genuinely see that reason as supporting the truth of a proposition. I take it as uncontroversial that we can make mistakes about these connections. Often, part of learning that we are mistaken is finding out that a reason on which we had based our belief was a reason of the wrong kind. An interpersonal reason, therefore,

[46] That the criticism is automatic plays an important distinguishing role. A critic need only point out the basis of your belief; they need not show that the reason is false or outweighed by other reasons.

even if it were a reason of the wrong kind, could still form the basis for a belief just if an agent takes it as a reason of the right kind. Such misapprehensions are common. Observing the fact that people often take friendship to justify greater faith in a friend's abilities is a typical starting point for the doxastic partiality literature.[47] Therefore, that an interpersonal reason is the wrong kind of reason need not, in itself, prevent it forming the basis of a belief. However, relying only on this observation to show that we can believe on the basis of interpersonal reasons will make the view vulnerable to the self-denial objection.

The self-denial objection raises problems on two levels. First, the theory will now imply that non-philosophers[48] who live lives free from thoughts of truth conduciveness, doxastic wronging, and epistemic reasoning, should, to protect their relationships, avoid learning about just those topics. Doing so would risk them coming to realise that reasons which they took to bear on the truth of matters pertinent to their social lives were in fact just extrinsic interpersonal reasons which could not, on their own, prove those propositions true. Since losing interpersonally justified beliefs is unlikely to be interpersonally rational, the interpersonally rational thing to do will be to stay ignorant as to the philosophy of interpersonal reasons.

The second level at which the objection works is, perhaps, more troubling. For the few of us who will be aware of interpersonal reasons, we are now instructed to do our best to ignore the philosophy when engaging in interpersonal matters, to engage in a sort of doublethink on

[47] Doxastic partiality is deeply connected with interpersonal reasoning and doxastic wronging. A lot of the themes and problems discussed in this section will be familiar, therefore, to partialists and anti-partialists alike. Section 8 will aim to explore those connections in greater detail.

[48] And a good deal of actual philosophers.

matters regarding our loved ones. Furthermore, once we have learned of the existence of interpersonal reasons, it seems we are to avoid reflecting about interpersonally pertinent beliefs, given that reflection might reveal a lurking extrinsic reason basing a belief and force us to reconsider. In short, the interpersonally rational thing for the philosopher to do is to be in a sort of self-denial about their beliefs.[49]

6.4 Interpersonal Reasoning and Self-Reflective Endorsement

The objection from self-denial makes the following charge: in order to comply with the sort of interpersonal reasoning I advocate for, agents must have problematic delusions regarding the reasons they have available to them. We will consider a couple of underlying reasons for thinking that self-denial is problematic. First, that is infantilising to those who are being reasoned about. Second, because it leaves the believers doxastic attitudes unacceptably unstable. I aim to offer four mutually supporting responses to these charges. First, in 6.4.1, I highlight that an interpersonal reason may move you to believe without itself being the basis for the belief. Second, in 6.4.2, I show that a comparative minority of instances of interpersonal reasoning are touched by the objection, and argue that it is only interpersonal reasoning during some purely interpersonal projects in which the objection from self-denial is a real problem. Third, in 6.4.3, I will argue that for those beliefs that are genuinely interpersonally based, it is open to the believer to self-reflectively endorse such reasoning even when the misapprehension is pointed out to them. Fourth, in 6.4.4, I will push the idea that, at least some of the time, the self-denial demonstrated by reasoners with interpersonally

[49] Additionally, those who are aware of the philosophy may have an apparent obligation to avoid teaching others as doing so will threaten their ignorance and interpersonal lives. You might then worry about the ethical standing of this very thesis.

based beliefs really is best. The alternatives of either rectifying their beliefs or avoiding forming those beliefs are worse than self-denial.

6.4.1 Interpersonal Reasons Guide Reasoning

One reason that the objector might insist that such self-denial is problematic is that it is ultimately infantilising to the people who are believed in as a result.[50] The objector's stance being that they do not want a loved one to form a belief about them as a result of a misunderstanding regarding which beliefs were justified. Rather, the objector wants their loved one to form a belief that is based on the evidence. They want to be believed in because the evidence justifies their loved one's belief and, presumably, to be in some way responsible for the evidence being that way. The objector will be dissatisfied with a loved one believing in them simply because doing so will make the relationship stronger.

Of course, there is something infantilising about being believed in purely because that is what is best socially. For one thing, it seems to show that the support was not sensitive to the work that you put in. However, this need not be the only way in which an interpersonal reason moves us to believe. It may be, for instance, that recognising that a friend wants us to believe in them moves us to search for the sort of evidence that would justify that belief. We may spend more time attending to their qualities that we think make them more likely to succeed at their chosen task or not dwelling on the times where they have fallen short. To be more precise, interpersonal reasons might move us to focus on constitutive reasons for forming the

[50] Some version of this infantilisation objection is invariably brought up when I present this work. I am thankful to Viviane Fairbank and Evie Moss for their presentations of this concern, but I have doubtlessly benefitted from discussing it with everyone who has pushed it.

interpersonally rational belief. In this, we form a belief that would not have otherwise formed had we not felt the initial pull of the interpersonal reasons. In this way, an interpersonal reason can move us to believe by causing us to deliberate in certain ways and gather or ignore certain evidence. Interpersonal reasons might also affect the strength of epistemic reasons needed in order for those epistemic reasons to base a belief. That we are friends might make me more inclined to believe in you *based on my evidence* or withhold believing poorly of you when presented with evidence from others when I would have believed poorly if we were not friends.[51] In those instances, it is not that I have based the belief in an interpersonal reason, but rather that the interpersonal reasons have altered the grounds on which I form that belief.

Knowing that you are reasoning differently because you are reasoning about a friend is not a necessary inhibitor on forming beliefs. A reasoner may be perfectly aware that they are believing more readily of a friend than a stranger or that they are putting in more work to find evidence than they otherwise might have. They will still be able to form a belief because they will still see some of their available reasons as genuinely supporting the truth of the proposition. This is in contrast to how knowing a reason does not support a belief necessarily inhibits agents from believing based on that reason. Given that, the sort of interpersonally guided reasoning discussed here does not require the sort of self-denial that the objector is targeting.

However, while self-denial is not necessary, it may be contingently required for some agents. For some people, knowing that their reasoning was influenced by bias will be a barrier to belief formation, even if that result is interpersonally best. Therefore, interpersonal reasoning

[51] This move of highlighting that reasons of the wrong kind can influence how we reason without being the basis on which we believe echoes moves made in the doxastic voluntarism debate. See (Basu, 2019b. Fn 3) and (Hieronymi, 2008). For a related strategy see (Nelson, 2010) and (Basu & Schroeder, 2019. 185-194).

might call for you to be ignorant of the influence of interpersonal reasons on your thinking, i.e. call for self-denial regarding your motives and influences to achieve interpersonally better beliefs. The objector can then still insist that it is not just interpersonally based beliefs that require infantilising delusions, but in fact any kind of interpersonal reasoning where reasoners must keep themselves in the dark about why they think as they do.

There is still, I maintain, a significant difference between these two types of interpersonally formed beliefs. This is because the group of people who care about how a belief is formed and the group that cares about the evidence on which a belief is formed is distinct, both conceptually and practically. Consider a photographer whose parents are otherwise uninterested in photography. The parents might, in light of the fact that it is their child's work, put in extra effort to attend to the quality of a photograph taken by their child. Doing so may lead them to noting its good qualities: its framing, lighting, etc. When they form the belief that their child's photographs are good, they do so for epistemic reasons, but they have been guided to that belief by interpersonal concerns.

I take it as entirely plausible that the photographer would be satisfied with their parents believing in their work in this fashion, even if the photographer recognised that the only reason their parents put the work in was because of their relationship. Additionally, they may well have not been satisfied had their parents merely come to believe the work was good because their child did it. I take cases like this to be sufficient to show that not all cases of interpersonal reasoning are susceptible to the self-denial objection, either because no self-denial is involved or because the denial is unproblematic to the believed in agent.

Of course, my language here is hedged, I talk about “plausibly” being satisfied with one form of reasoning and “maybe” being dissatisfied with another. This language is unavoidable given a core commitment of the wider work that people have agency over how they wish others to reason about them. Even if the sort of self-denial required for one type of interpersonal reasoning will respect the wishes of an agent who would be dissatisfied with another, the objectors point that someone may find both unacceptable will stand.

6.4.2 Interpersonally Required Self-Denial is Rare

This leads us on to my second response to the objector, that, if interpersonal rationality does call for a problematic form of self-denial, then it is only in a relatively narrow range of cases. Recall the types of projects considered in the previous section. Epistemic projects are truth aimed, therefore a reasoner engaged in an epistemic project is best served by properly understanding how their reasons bear on propositions, i.e. properly understand what their evidence is. It follows that jointly epistemic and interpersonal projects are also best completed when a reasoner is clear minded about their reasons given that those projects are also truth aimed. Interpersonal factors may *appropriately* influence the course of reasoning in a joint epistemic/interpersonal project but never in a way that gets in the way of the project's truth aim.

Consider again the doctor reasoning about their patient. This case, I have argued, involves both interpersonal and epistemic goals given the doctor aims to have true beliefs about their patient's condition in order to fulfil their role as a doctor (a social end given that being a doctor is a social role). Despite this, the doctor will do badly should they form beliefs about how to care for their patient on the basis of interpersonal reasons like “this patient is relying

on me" or "I have a duty as a doctor to my patients". These are reasons of the wrong kind for beliefs about what treatments are best for the patient. Equally, these interpersonal reasons should not influence the evidence that it takes for the doctor to form a belief about treatment. Interpersonal reasons may still appropriately guide the doctor, however, by influencing the evidence that they attend to or gather. Indeed, such reasons are precisely what explains why a doctor reasons about their patients specifically and not just any agent they encounter.

I draw attention to this because in these dual projects with interpersonal goals, no self-denial of the kind the objector is targeting is called for. A reasoner may be unaware of these interpersonal influences, but, should they become aware, there is no reason to expect that they must now delude themselves regarding the effect of those influences in order to best achieve the goals of their project. Granted, a reasoner can mistake an interpersonal reason as the right kind of reason regardless of the project they are engaged in. The doctor could form a belief on the basis of their relationship to their patient, but in these instances doing so is a genuine mistake and can be criticised as such both interpersonally and epistemically.

Another point limiting the scope of the objection is that interpersonal projects are naturally sensitive to the desires of the concerned parties. That an agent would feel infantilised by a friend reasoning about them differently or forming a belief about them just because they are friends, interpersonally counts against reasoning in that fashion. This is essentially to restate the earlier point regarding participant versus objective reasoning, wherein reasoning from the participant stance only respects an agent if that is how the agent wishes to be reasoned about. Given that the aim of interpersonal projects is to further social ends, if forming a belief on non-epistemic grounds or allowing interpersonal factors to lower one's threshold for belief would be viewed as disrespectful to an agent then it is not interpersonally rational to reason

about that agent in that fashion. In those cases, the sort of self-denial targeted by the objector is not warranted by the demands of interpersonal rationality regardless of whether or not it occurs.

I have so far resisted the self-denial objection by way of rejecting it, insisting that in most cases it would in fact be interpersonally irrational to be in any sort of problematic self-denial. It is, however, likely that interpersonal concerns will call for agents to misinterpret their evidence in order to form interpersonally better beliefs in at least some cases. Specifically, in purely interpersonal cases, like the one of the amateur poet friend, where your available epistemic reasons will be neutral to or actively count against a belief warranted by your interpersonal reasons. In those cases, the only way in which you will be able to form the belief that will best serve interpersonal purposes is to be in self-denial about your available reasons and to see your relationship as warranting faith in their abilities.[52]

While I suspect that an objector will want to press that there is something problematic about interpersonal rationality requiring self-delusion in these circumstances, I do not think infantilisation can be properly considered as the underlying problem. In these purely interpersonal cases, the reason that forming a specific belief is interpersonally rational is that you are under a legitimate expectation to form that belief.[53] Given we respect agents when we

[52] There is, admittedly, some ambiguity here between misconstruing an interpersonal reason (this person is my friend) as epistemic and misconstruing or inventing an epistemic reason (this person has the skills of a poet) on which to believe because of some interpersonal concern. My stance is that both can occur and that for the purposes of the objection discussed here the difference is immaterial. People, at the very least, talk as if they believe for interpersonal reasons (I believe *because* they are my friend) and certainly they will invent reasons on which to believe on behalf of their friends. Both can be interpreted as objectionable self-denial.

[53] I can imagine variants of the poet case where the poet wants you to believe a certain way but cannot legitimately expect you to do so. In those cases I am not convinced that it is interpersonally rational to form any particular belief. Instead, in these cases I am inclined to

satisfy their legitimate expectations and disrespect them when we do not, I do not think it can be infantilising to satisfy a legitimate expectation.[54]

6.4.3 Self-Denial Can be Self-Reflectively Endorsed

A more plausible candidate for thinking that this sort of self-denial is problematic is that it makes the resulting beliefs unstable. If I believe in my friend on interpersonal reasons, then that belief will not stand up to scrutiny even if I genuinely take myself to have good reasons for holding it. An inquiring third party with a half-decent grasp on what makes a good poet will be able to show that my belief rests on the wrong kind of reasons. Given the unstable basis for the belief and the assumed interpersonal requirement to maintain it (your friend presumably does not want you to believe in them only for a moment), the objector may worry that interpersonal rationality does not only demand self-denial, but also a whole host of actions to maintain that denial. I should avoid pondering too much on my belief or discussing it with people who may be inclined to correct me etc.

I cannot deny the objector's point in its entirety; believing on the basis of an interpersonal reason does leave one open to losing the belief if one realises that the interpersonal reason is of the wrong kind. Equally, that a belief is interpersonally best does imply that a reasoner has interpersonal reason not to question the belief. However, I think both of these points turn out to not be so problematic once we properly appreciate the extent to which they are true.

---

think there are only interpersonal demands on how you act. It is legitimate expectation satisfaction and the avoidance of doxastic wronging which are reasons for having beliefs and not merely acting as if you believe.

[54] On the modest assumption that infantilisation is antithetical to respecting.

Regarding instability, it is worth noting that an agent who recognises their belief is unsupported by their evidence does not instantaneously lose that belief. Part of overcoming a self-destructive view of oneself, for instance, may involve recognising that the unkind beliefs one has regarding themselves are unsupported by evidence and therefore likely false. Such revelations, however, are often only the first steps in overcoming the belief, much as we may wish otherwise. The same follows for the agent who believes for interpersonal reasons. Pointing out that their reasons are of the wrong kind does not necessitate the loss of belief; it may or may not prompt reasoning that leads to a change in belief. The requirement to see your reasons as supporting a proposition is a requirement on belief formation, not a requirement on belief maintenance.

This opens the way for a stronger point. Upon realising that our beliefs are not epistemically justified, we may still endorse having reasoned in an interpersonally justified manner. Suppose we are arguing about my belief in our mutual friend's poetry prowess, and you convince me that my belief in them is based on extrinsic reasons and thereby not epistemically justified. Even if I grant you your argument, that by no means entails that I will regret holding the belief. I may coherently view myself as having acceptably put faith in my friend and may even criticise you for not having done the same. We can call this move "self-reflective endorsement". One self-reflectively endorses just when they retroactively consider and endorse the reasoning that led to a belief or action. The key point here is that one can self-reflectively endorse self-denial; one can see their own self-denial as generating desirable beliefs and good consequences. That one has self-reflectively endorsed an interpersonally based belief is perfectly compatible with continuing to hold that belief.[55] While I agree that beliefs based on interpersonal reasons are not stable in the same way that,

[55] Indeed, I think we should expect someone who insists that "I believe in them because they are my friend" to not be likely to seriously reconsider their belief.

say, your belief in basic mathematical propositions ought to be, they are not so unstable as to be guaranteed to be lost should you reflect on your reasons for having them.

6.4.4 Sometimes Self-Denial Really is Best

What then of the second point, that beliefs based on self-denial will not hold up to scrutiny if reflected on too much? As I have indicated above, I think interpersonally based beliefs will hold up to some reflection, at least for some agents. However, we should expect that amount to be limited. It is hard to see how an agent who is seriously questioning their interpersonally based belief in their friend will hold on to that belief if they also realise that their interpersonal reason is of the wrong kind. At the very least, such considerations risk the belief being lost, thus the objector's worry that interpersonal concerns will require agents to not seriously reflect on their interpersonally based beliefs.

While I agree that interpersonal concerns can generate this requirement to avoid reflection, I think it turns out to be one that we are familiar with. Thinking more generally, there is intuitively something wrong with agents who waste time questioning their own beliefs. Consider the philosopher who is terrified of publishing a mistake and so spends all of their time interrogating their own beliefs for error. The work of such a philosopher will be seriously inhibited, and we can criticise them as being overly introspective and lacking the confidence required to produce good work. What the philosopher does wrong, I suggest, is to reflect on their beliefs without proper reason to.[56] This can be a mistake both epistemically and interpersonally speaking. If I deny myself the ability to feel the conviction in my justified beliefs by questioning them, then I will struggle to come to know more by relying on said

[56] That is, they violate a norm of inquiry. For more on norms of inquiry see (Haziza, 2023).

beliefs. Equally, if I am constantly doubting my friends by questioning my faith in them then I am likely to find them disappointed and unable to rely on me.

Just as the reason that introspection without cause is problematic differs between the epistemic and interpersonal lens, so too do the reasons that justify reconsidering one's beliefs. That you have received salient counter evidence indicates that the held belief is wrong. This is naturally a reason to reconsider a belief in the context of epistemic projects given their aim of avoiding falsehood. Counterevidence will not be a reason to reconsider one's belief in the context of purely interpersonal projects, however. Rather, in that context, reasons to reconsider will be reasons that indicate that one's current beliefs or planned courses of action are not conducive to furthering one's social ends. These might be discovering your friend wants to be reasoned about objectively or that they really do want you to be at their poetry recital. Additionally, a shift in project can be cause to reconsider a belief. The fact that your belief had been formed as part of an interpersonal project is reason to reconsider it before relying on it in an epistemic one and vice versa.

What I am attempting to show here is that while interpersonal projects do require that one avoids self-reflection, this requirement is just the interpersonal analogue to the uncontroversial epistemic equivalent. There is no total requirement to avoid self-reflection on the picture presented here, rather, any such self-reflection should be done under the appropriate prompting. Of course, the objector may still wish to take issue with the idea that counter evidence can fail to be a reason to reconsider, but this is just to take issue with the wider idea that truth can fail to be the proper measure of success for belief.

That concludes my response to the objection from self-denial, and the wider wrong kind of reason objection. To the extent that interpersonal rationality requires some degree of self-denial, I have aimed to show that such self-denial is both possible, and not as concerning as it might first seem. More broadly, I examined how the scope of what counts as interpersonal reasoning is broader than might initially appear. It does not merely involve inferring a belief on the basis of interpersonal reasons. It also involves allowing one's reasoning to be led by those reasons, to allow them to guide how one considers the evidence, and the sort of evidence that one gathers.

7.1 Testimony-Based Objections to Interpersonal Reasoning

We now turn to a separate kind of practical problem for interpersonal reasoning. While the wrong kind of reason problem stemmed from the nature of interpersonal reasons, the testimony objection is based on their apparent inaccessibility in important cases. In 7.2, I explain the objection. I then show that competing theories of how to reason in these cases appear to do better. In 7.3, I present a reply to the objection on behalf of interpersonal reasoning that appeals to the idea that there are legitimate expectations on reasoning.

7.2 Objection from Testimony[57]

Consider the following pair of cases.

Truth-Teller: Your friend has been accused of murder. The evidence against them appears strong, but not decisive. They have motive, opportunity, and no alibi. When you talk to them,

[57] I am grateful for Sanford Goldberg bringing this objection to my attention and our discussions on the matter.

they insist that they are innocent. As it turns out, they are innocent. The real murderer has convincingly framed them.

Lie-Teller: Your friend has been accused of murder. The evidence against them appears strong, but not decisive. They have motive, opportunity, and no alibi. When you talk to them they insist that they are innocent. As it turns out, they are guilty. They are lying to you in the hopes that you will help their defence.

For the purposes of the objection, we will take the following points for granted:

I. Your evidence in the two cases *appears* identical. The testimony is the same. The only variation is that in Truth-Teller the testimony is true and in Lie-Teller the testimony is false. However, there is nothing, from your perspective, that changes about the testimony between the two cases. The reasons available to you in both cases are the same.

II. While the testifier in Truth-Teller may plausibly be able to legitimately expect you to believe them, the testifier in Lie-Teller cannot legitimately expect you to believe them.

    A. (Premise) Testifiers have a legitimate expectation of being believed when they know they are testifying the truth.

        => Testifier in Truth-Teller knows they are telling the truth so has a legitimate expectation that they be believed.

    B. (Premise) Testifiers can have no legitimate expectation of being believed when they know they are not testifying the truth.

=> Testifier in Lie-Teller knows they are lying so has no legitimate expectation that they be believed.

This case poses issues for interpersonal rationality as an answer to the impact question. Recall that the reason that interpersonal rationality can answer the impact question is because it posits a connection between the potential of doxastic wronging and how you ought to reason. Namely, if a belief would constitute a doxastic wrong, then that counts against that belief being interpersonally rational. To see how issues arise on this view, suppose you were to find yourself in such the position described above. Your goal, in that case, would be to determine what to believe regarding your friend's guilt or innocence. Given they have testified to you on the matter, this amounts to an aim of deciding whether or not to believe your friend.[58]

The theory of interpersonal rationality will give you the following advice. There are two ways you could reason about your friend's innocence. Either you can reason as part of an epistemic project, or as an interpersonal one. If you reason as part of an epistemic project, then you should reason in a way that is epistemically rational. This will most likely involve recognising the very strong evidence you have counting against them and coming to believe that they are guilty. On the other hand, if you reason as part of an interpersonal project, then you should reason in a way that is interpersonally rational. This will most likely involve holding them in the participant stance and trusting their testimony, thereby coming to believe that they are innocent.[59]

[58] We will bracket away cases where you could come to believe your friend was innocent on some basis other than their testimony. In the cases we are interested in, if you believe they are innocent it will be because they have given you testimony to that effect.

[59] It will likely be interpersonally rational to believe your friend since not to do so will insult them. See (Hazlett, 2017).

The pertinent question, then, is which mode of reasoning is appropriate for the situation. Ought you see yourself as engaging in an epistemic project or an interpersonal one? It is on this question that problems emerge for the theory. The presence of a doxastic wrong is supposed to help answer this question. If believing your friend is guilty would constitute a doxastic wrong, then that will damage your relationship and therefore stand in favour of reasoning interpersonally. Note that as the case is set up, if you disbelieve your friend in Truth-Teller you will wrong them, but you will not wrong them by doing so in Lie-Teller. Thus, in Truth-Teller, the presence of a potential doxastic wrong indicates that you should reason interpersonally. In Lie-Teller, on the other hand, the fact that there is no potential for doxastic wronging indicates that you should reason epistemically as your friend's attempt at deception plausibly counts against reasoning in a way as to maintain the relationship.[60]

This, as the objector will point out, is completely useless advice. It amounts to saying "in order to determine how to reason, first determine if you are being lied to", which is the very thing which you are to reason about. Determining whether or not you are being lied to in order to determine whether or not you might doxastically wrong is precisely the reasoning process that the doxastic wrong would bear on. Thus, doxastic wrongs as I have conceived them could not properly bear on our reasoning, at least not in this case.

---

[60] One easy way out for my view might have been to insist that both cases are, at best, joint projects. If that were true then there is no special problem for my view which would hold that you ought to reason as the evidentialist (or whatever our best theory of getting things right) suggests. In the interests of being maximally charitable to my objectors I grant that there are instances where there is an apparent divergence between what project you ought to engage between cases.

Not only is this a major mark against interpersonal rationality as currently presented, but, in addition, competing theories of how you ought to reason do much better here. RME, as an alternative answer to the impact question would advise that it is the risks of wronging that matter. That you perceive a risk of doxastically wronging ought to bear on what you perceive as the rational thing to believe in the circumstance. This does not require you to make a judgement on whether or not your belief will constitute a doxastic wrong but rather to make an assessment of your friend's reliability.

It is also worth noting the sort of response that an evidentialist could give here. (Goldberg, 2019) gives a response based on so-called “Value-Reflecting Reasons” (V-RRs). Testimony can generate a V-RR for the hearer when they recognise the testifier as acting out of regard for the relationship. If we are friends and I know that lying to you will risk damaging the relationship, then that confers on me a practical reason to not lie to you. In recognising me as valuing the relationship, you thereby recognise me as having practical reason not to lie to you and therefore have reason to trust my testimony. So your friend’s testimony will generate for you a V-RR to believe them in so far as you have reason to think they value the relationship. The evidentialist, then, is also in a position to offer clear advice. On receiving the testimony, you are in a position to make an assessment of how incentivised your friend is not to lie to you.

Before moving on to the response on behalf of interpersonal reasoning, I want to note two common features in the more successful responses above. We will use these features as guides for what a successful response looks like. If I can show that interpersonal reasoning, in fact, meets these metrics, then I will consider the objection met.

The first is that both theories suggest that you ought to reason the same in both cases. This is prima facie plausible given that, from the hearer's perspective, the two cases are identical at the point of receiving the testimony. Given this, it is hard to see what could justify the hearer reasoning differently between Truth-Teller and Lie-Teller. The second feature is that neither of the alternative responses considered give a definitive answer on how you ought to reason. Indeed, Goldberg says as much in the following:

"It is no part of my account that these reasons will always point in a univocal direction" - (ibid. 2234)

A successful response does not need to issue definitive answers on how the hearer ought to reason in these cases, for that we would need every pertinent detail. Rather, for interpersonal rationality to be successful here, it need only indicate what features that hearer ought to consider.

7.3 Expectations on Reasoning

In order for the theory of interpersonal rationality to respond to the objection, we will need to identify some interpersonally relevant factor that is present in both cases. This factor must be one that hearer can access upon receiving the testimony, and should imply that hearer should reason the same in both Truth-Teller and Lie-Teller. I contend that there is such a factor, namely, the apparent expectation that you will trust testifier in both cases.

One reason to think that you will be expected to trust the testifier in both cases is to consider what grounds the legitimate expectation on belief. Being friends with someone allows you to

legitimately expect differently of them than you would a stranger. Suppose one of these expectations is an expectation of trust in testimony. Namely, that friends will trust one another to be able to give accurate accounts of how the world is.[61] I conceive of an expectation of trust as an expectation regarding reasoning. One satisfies an expectation of trust by reasoning in a way that treats the testifier's word as a basis for belief in and of itself. Often, satisfying this expectation will require reasoning from the participant stance.[62] From that expectation on reasoning we can explain the shift in expectations regarding belief between the two cases. Testifier in Truth-Teller has a legitimate expectation that their friend believes their testimony precisely because testifier is holding up their end of the deal in terms of the expectations that partially define the friendship. Testifier in Lie-Teller cannot have this legitimate expectation because they know that they are not holding up their end of the deal.

This, at the very least, indicates that there are expectations on reasoning as well as belief. In the case of Truth-Teller, these expectations seem straightforwardly legitimate. The key question is whether or not Lie-Teller also has legitimate expectation that you trust them. If they do not, then this point can do no work as a response, given we will be in the same circumstance as we were with doxastic wrongs. However, if Lie-Teller does have this legitimate expectation, then that will be a factor accessible to the hearer in both cases, which does not require taking a stand on whether or not testifier is telling the truth.

At first blush, it might seem implausible to say that Lie-Teller can legitimately expect your trust given they are lying. If lying overrides a legitimate expectation on belief does it not do

[61] Properly caveated of course. I need not trust my friend to be omniscient, only that they know the things that they purport to know and are within their technical ability to know.

[62] Given that if you reason from the objective stance then the testimony will just be another piece of evidence to be weighed against all your other evidence. On this point I follow the assurance view of testimony. See (Ross, 1986) and (Moran, 2005).

the same for trust? I certainly agree that there is more to be said for Truth-Teller's legitimate expectation, but I do think Lie-Teller has something going for them. Consider the following exchange where you disbelieved Lie-Teller and later came to discover that they were lying to you:

Lie-teller: "I can't believe you wouldn't believe me."
You: "But you were lying."
Lie-teller: "Yes, but you're supposed to trust me. *I was expecting you to reason as if I was telling the truth*. Had I been telling the truth you wouldn't have known any different."

I take Lie-Teller to be making two distinct complaints in this exchange. The first is not being believed, which is effectively rebutted by pointing out that Lie-Teller was deceiving you. Lie-Teller then makes a second, distinct complaint which regards your reasoning in a way which reflects your lack of trust in them. One way of thinking about Lie-Teller's complaint is in terms of counterfactuals. The expectations associated with friendship allow you to trust that you will believe one another when telling the truth. Yet your failure to believe Lie-Teller reveals that, had they been telling the truth, they would not have been able to rely on you to believe them.

There is, I contend, something valid about Lie-Teller's second complaint. If we understand friendship as involving a mutual expectation that we trust one another, then, in order for that expectation to be valuable, it must be one that can be relied upon. This is especially so in high stakes situations. We can think of this ability to rely on one's trust in us as characterising what is valuable about friends who will stand by you in tough situations. Friends who can only be relied on when doing so is easy are often thought of as no friends at all. What

Lie-Teller's second complaint is getting at is that in not believing them you revealed that you could not have been relied upon.

Does this amount to showing that Lie-Teller could legitimately expect your trust in the instance of the lie? I am inclined to think it does; I think liars can still hope and expect that their friends will stand by them in tough circumstances. Still, there are a couple points regarding this move that are worth discussing which should help convince you that it is plausible.

The first is to notice that a view which holds you ought to believe your friends only when they tell the truth would have some odd consequences. For one thing, part of the epistemic value of trusting friends and coming to learn from their testimony is precisely that we come to know what we did not know before. The advice, "only believe what is true" is unactionable because we are not in a position to assess whether much of what we are told is true. It makes more sense, I would suggest, to accept that sometimes we ought to put ourselves in an epistemically vulnerable position and trust our friends. In doing so, we may come to believe some false things, but we will also be in a position to acquire knowledge that we otherwise would not have and further relationships that we otherwise would have avoided.

This point regarding vulnerability follows (Dannenberg, 2018). The notion of vulnerability also elucidates our second point, which is that in lying to us, Lie-Teller has exploited that vulnerability. This is something that we can criticise them for. Lie-Teller has committed a number of interpersonally objectionable acts, likely more problematic than your transgression. They have not only lied, which is a thing they could do to anyone, but they have also exploited the fact that you would be interpersonally pressured into believing them.

In saying that there is a sense in which you wrong Lie-Teller, we do not thereby say that Lie-Teller did nothing wrong. In fact, that there was a legitimate expectation of trust partially explains what is pernicious about Lie-Teller's lying.

In allowing that both Lie-Teller and Truth-Teller have legitimate expectations on how you reason, we can see that interpersonal reasoning does issue actionable advice as to how to reason between the cases. In both cases, there is an interpersonally pertinent factor, trusting your friend and thereby satisfying their expectation, which stands in favour of reasoning interpersonally in both cases. This fact will be accessible before you make any determination about whether or not your friend is lying. Of course, this does not settle matters, but as we saw in the alternative answers, definitively settling the case is not the goal. It may be that the epistemic stakes are too high for this to not be treated as an epistemic project. Perhaps you have been called onto the jury or are being called as a witness. Such circumstances can outweigh the interpersonal concerns and push you towards an epistemic project, as discussed in 5.3. In either case, interpersonal rationality can inform these dilemmas.

8.1 Partial Work for a Theory of Doxastic Wrongdoing

That completes this thesis's defence of the existence of doxastic wronging and interpersonal rationality. As stated at the outset, the ultimate aim in developing this view is not just to convince you that the theory, or at least something like it, is plausible, but that it can do the work of bringing together the so far disparate strands in contemporary social epistemology. In this final section, I begin to make good on that goal by showing the explanatory work that both doxastic wronging theory and interpersonal rationality can do for theories of doxastic partiality.

The work done is twofold; by endorsing the two theories defended here, the doxastic partialist stands to strengthen both their positive arguments for doxastic partiality and better answer their detractors. To that end, this final section is split in two halves. In 8.2, we will discuss positive arguments for partiality. These are the Value-Commitment Argument in 8.2.1 and the Care and Support Argument in 8.2.2.[63] In both instances, I will argue that doxastic wrongdoing and interpersonal rationality fit naturally into these arguments. In 8.3, I will respond to an overgeneration argument against partiality by appeal to the connection between doxastic wronging and legitimate expectation setting. The section will not be exhaustive, but I will consider it successful if the partialist feels motivated to take up doxastic wronging theory and interpersonal rationality. I leave until later the work of uncovering further theoretical benefits of endorsing these theories.

8.2 Arguments for Doxastic Partiality

To borrow an understanding of partiality from Stroud:

"To be partial to a person S (or to one's Fs) is simply, I propose, to have or to manifest some form of special or differentiated concern for S (or for one's Fs), as compared to relevantly similar others who are not S (or one's Fs)." - (Stroud, 2022. 234)

Take the doxastic partialist's claim to be that satisfying the demands of good friendship requires forming doxastic attitudes that violate traditional epistemic standards. Traditional epistemic standards hold that only truth-related reasons bear on what one ought to believe. So

[63] I borrow these titles from (Goldberg, 2022. 247-248)

for the epistemic partialist there are some circumstances where in order for S to meet the demands of good friendship with respect to T, S must hold doxastic attitude X where holding X would constitute a violation of traditional epistemic standards.

It is worth noting that doxastic partiality does not entail, by itself, a commitment to doxastic wronging or interpersonal rationality. These would be substantive further commitments for the doxastic partialist to make. For instance, it need not follow from the partialist's theory that just because a doxastic attitude X held by S constituted S's falling short of the demands of good friendship that X constituted a doxastic wrong. Equally, the partialist may want to argue for a No Conflicts type reconciliation between standards of rationality rather than endorse the divergence entailed by interpersonal rationality. Therefore, if doxastic partialists do take my advice then their view will be constrained in certain ways. I suspect they will have to hold that beliefs which fall short of the demands of good friendship have at least the potential to constitute doxastic wrongs. Additionally, in taking on interpersonal rationality, they would thereby need to reject No Conflicts. These points are not exhaustive, there is more to be said here regarding how these theories would fit together. We will consider this fit further as we come to the promised theoretical benefits.

8.2.1 Value-Commitment Argument

The Value-Commitment Argument (VCA) for doxastic partiality belongs to (ibid. 2022). VCA holds that good friendships are partially constituted by doxastic partiality, which thereby confers on us a reason to be doxastically partial. Stroud argues towards this point with an argument showing that we ought act in a partial manner towards our friends. That is, S ought to act in a way towards their friends that is more favourable than their non-friends.

Stroud then notes that we should expect an analogous argument to run for doxastic partiality, and that, if a theory wants to accept partial action while rejecting doxastic partiality, then it owes an explanation for the asymmetry.

Starting with the argument for partial action, Stroud makes three claims regarding the relation between good friendship and partial action. First, friendships described as good are partially constituted by partial action (ibid. 234). Second, good friendship being partially constituted in this way is something we normatively endorse (ibid. 234-235). Third, this normative endorsement is no surprise given that to do otherwise would amount to a rejection of the friendships we currently value (ibid. 236).

Stroud points out that the actions of good friends are exactly the sort of actions that tend to exhibit partiality. This claim should not be surprising; it is almost the defining feature of friendship that you act in a more positive manner towards your friends than you do your non-friends. For instance, it is not just that it is normal for me to offer a lift to a friend who I spot at a bus stop, but also that it would be suspect, bordering on creepy, to do the same for strangers. Furthermore, grounds for complaints against our friends often stem from them failing to show us sufficient partiality. If I consistently leave a close friend off the invitation list for my dinner parties, then that friend will presumably be owed some explanation as to why, especially if I am the sort to invite mere acquaintances.[64]

[64] Ideally, I keep my commitments about what constitutes friendship minimal. At the most basic level, whatever constitutes friendship is enough to distinguish being a friend from being a stranger. Readers might wonder about theoretical utopias where agents treat each other equally; where it would be normal to offer a ride to anyone whom you saw waiting at a bus stop, regardless of how familiar they are. My view may imply that in societies like this, given there is no distinction in treatment between friend and stranger, that there is, in fact, no distinction between the two. I find myself comfortable with this consequence, friendship is not merely a label for the people we know by name.

These patterns of behaviour do not merely indicate that partial practice correlates with good friendships. Rather, our patterns of praise towards friends who act in partial manners and complaint towards those who do not indicate that engaging in partial practice is partially constitutive of good friendship. To offer my friend the lift partially constitutes my being a good friend just as my pattern of leaving a friend off the guest list constitutes my being a bad one. This is most clear when considering what it takes to show that a friend is good or bad. Often, the sort of evidence that we will reach for in these instances are evidence of partial action or lack thereof.

The claim made so far, that partiality in action partially constitutes good friendship is merely descriptive but as Stroud points out, we affirm these practices as desirable in the normative sense. If I am said to be a good friend by my passenger then they are not merely offering a description of my person or our relationship. Rather, they are offering praise for my act as reflective of admirable or virtuous character that others ought to emulate. Equally, the friend who calls me a bad friend for failing to invite them to dinner is offering normative condemnation. They are not merely describing my act but asserting that I ought to act differently. Let us contrast this against describing a cigar as good. When I describe a cigar as good, I merely denote it as a good instance of its kind, my language need not imply anything normative about the cigar. I do not, for instance, thereby say that one ought to smoke this cigar or purchase a box of them.[65]

[65] Such assessments might become normative in context. Perhaps we are discussing which cigars to smoke, in which case my description implies that we ought to smoke these cigars. The point remains that friendship is not like this. You do not need to know the context to know that my description of you as a good friend implies a normative assessment. Indeed, attempting to cancel such implications would look supremely odd.

The point, then, is that the partial actions associated with good friendship should be thought of as having positive normative assessment. That is not to say that we always ought to be partial. The president who fills their cabinet with only their friends and family is very likely violating important ethical norms. They ought not be partial in this way, even at the cost of good friendship. However, barring these sorts of limits, there has, to my knowledge, been no serious attempt to challenge the normative assessment that is prevalent in our talk of good friends. As Stroud points out, this is no accident. That partiality in action partially constitutes good friendship entails that to normatively condemn such partiality just is to condemn the practice of friends as we currently find it. This move is not principally ruled out. One can coherently hold our current practices of friendship as objectionable, but such a move would be arguing the end of what is an incredibly valued part of our interpersonal lives. It would require yet uncovered arguments, which run counter to both common sense and our best understanding of what constitutes human flourishing as social creatures.

Moving from this to an argument for doxastic partiality, note that the descriptive claim (that partial action partially constitutes good friendship) seems to extend to doxastic partiality (ibid. 236-239). Indeed, it is precisely that observation which motivates the doxastic partialist in the first place. It is not just that I will be more likely to think that my friend has passed their exams or that their poetry will prove better than the venue. It is that having these partial beliefs is evidence of my being a good friend and that consistently failing to have them would itself be the basis for accusing me of being a bad one.

As before, this remains only a descriptive point about the partial constitution of good friendships. We can still ask the normative question of whether or not this doxastic partiality is good. Unlike with the case of partial action, there is no presupposed theoretical consensus

here. As we will see, there *has* been a serious effort to argue that we ought not be doxastically partial. Stroud's points out, however, that, against the backdrop of our normative praise for partial action, this move should puzzle us (ibid. 239-242). It is puzzling because just as with partial action, if a theory condemns doxastic partiality then it also must hold that we ought to avoid good friendships as we currently find them or, at the very least, wish they were constituted differently. Given just how highly valued these relationships are, we should be sceptical, Stroud thinks, of theories that hold we should avoid them.

Doxastic wronging proves helpful for the VCA by telling against a certain kind of objection that anti-doxastic partialists may be tempted to level. One way to break the symmetry between doxastic partiality and partial action would be to argue that the former is not, in fact, constitutive of good friendship while the latter is.[66] This would allow the objector to resist the argument for doxastic partiality without being pressured to reject partial action.

By relying on the existence of doxastic wronging, the epistemic partialist could issue the following response to this kind of objection. Take these two more general claims about how friendships in general are constituted. Bad relationships are, in part, bad due to at least one party wronging the other. If I regularly undermine and belittle a friend who seeks reassurance from me, then, to the extent that we are even willing to describe me as a friend, I will be considered a bad friend. It will be sufficient to point to my wronging to show that the

[66] (Arpaly & Brinkerhoff, 2018) Offer an argument in this vein. One of their main motivations in that article is the premise that there are no practical reasons for belief "in a broad sense" (ibid. 40). Given this, they might be inclined to reject the move suggested here on the basis that the possibility of doxastic wronging as defended in this piece typically generates only practical reason to believe. I take much of our prior discussion to be pushing back on exactly this point and thus do not think that what I have to say here can be straightforwardly rejected. Nor is this a settled question on the part of the anti-partialists. (Crawford, 2017), for instance, is amenable to the possibility of practical reasons for belief.

friendship is a poor one.[67] We might then expect that good friendships are partly constituted by the avoidance of wrong and the doing right by your friends.

I think that we can view the descriptive claims made by Stroud as specific instances of these more general claims. The reason that partial action is partially constitutive of good friendship is because in acting partially we do right by our friends, we demonstrate the proper respect they are due and avoid wronging them. By invoking doxastic wronging, the partialist is then able to then make the same move in regards to doxastic partiality. Doxastically partial beliefs are partially constitutive of good friendship just when in forming those beliefs we avoid wronging our friends. Vitally, doxastic partiality is constitutive for the same reasons that partial action is constitutive, and so we should expect an objector to struggle to reject the descriptive claim without also rejecting partial action as constitutive of good friendship.

It is worth specifying what exactly I see as the connection between being doxastically partial and committing doxastic wrongs. Recall that the cases which motivated the doxastic wrong theorist in the first place were instances where individuals form beliefs that invite complaint from their subject even though the belief is best supported by their evidence. In these cases, in order for the perpetrator of the doxastic wrongs to avoid forming the supposed doxastic wrong, they would have to form a belief which was not best supported by their evidence, i.e. violate traditional epistemic standards. Believing in this way is just to be doxastically partial. It is these cases in which being partial is required for doxastic wrong avoidance (i.e. because an agent legitimately expects you to be partial) that I suggest that doxastic partiality should be understood as partially constituting good friendship.

[67] I can conceive of scenarios where what is best for my friend is that I belittle them (perhaps their ego has grown too large), but on the assumption that it is really best for them I then lose the intuition that I have wronged them.

One important upshot of this connection is that it implies that partiality can be wrongful. While I have argued that doxastic wrong avoidance is typically best achieved by reasoning in a way that violates traditional epistemic standards, there are cases where agents legitimately expect to be reasoned about in an objective manner. In these instances, forming a doxastically partial belief about your friend may wrong them and could not be constitutive of good friendship given the more general claim.

This in itself need not be an issue for the partialist given their claim is that partiality is called for in *some* circumstances. Indeed, the partialist should not be expected to make the stronger total claim for the same reason that we would not expect them to claim that good friendship *always* requires partial action. If I were, for instance, responsible for assessing my friend on their ability to drive, I do best by them when I issue an impartial assessment. To do otherwise is to allow them to be in harm's way or to unduly restrict their freedoms. Cases like this are no threat to the claim that partial action is partially constitutive of good friendship. This mirrors the fact that single instances where doxastic partiality hinders friendship is no threat to the claim that doxastic partiality is partially constitutive of good friendship.

In fact, there is a major benefit for the partialist in having a clear criteria for when partiality is and is not required. Doing so blocks another line of objection which the partialist might face. Recall that an important aspect of legitimate expectations is that they are set by the agent who has some agency over what they can legitimately expect. Given the proposed connection between partiality and doxastic wronging, this leaves open the possibility that, for some people, good friendship will consist in very little doxastic partiality. For specifically these groups, partiality may not be what constitutes good friendship. This is a result that I think the

partialist ought to welcome. An objector to partiality who was motivated by the thought that *they* did not want to be thought of in a partial manner may then complain that doxastic partiality cannot be constitutive in *any* good friendship.

In embracing the limits on the partialist claim as I set them out, we can rule out this line of objection. It will not be enough to point to a friendship where two friends legitimately expect objectivity. Such a result is, in fact, predicted, at least conceptually, by the limits I have proposed. Rather, the descriptive claim (doxastic partiality is constitutive of good friendship) will remain secure so long as the partialist can give arguments as to why we should expect some agents to legitimately expect partiality.

8.2.2 Care and Support Argument

The Care and Support Argument (CSA) pushed by (Keller, 2018) turns on the idea that whether a life goes well (flourishes) can depend on what people believe about us. Most notably, what our friends believe about us. This then impresses on our friends a reason to believe in such a way as to assist our flourishing even when that belief will be partial.

The notion of flourishing used here need only be fairly minimal. It encompasses a means of evaluating how an agent's life has gone that involves more than just their subjective experience. That is not to say that flourishing cannot encompass experience, only that, whatever flourishing consists in, it includes more than just that. Simply being told that someone experienced high wellbeing cannot settle the notion of whether or not they flourished. That a person has lived out their life in luxury and comfort is likely good for

them, but we may resist describing their life as a flourishing one if they achieved none of their goals and were reviled as greedy and aloof by their peers.[68]

In order for the CSA to go through, it will need to be the case that one aspect of flourishing is goal achievement. That is to say, the success of one's projects contributes to one's life going well and that in so far as we fail to achieve our goals that will constitute a detraction in our flourishing. For Keller's part, this claim feels very intuitive. Something like it would have to be true in order to help explain why it is that for my life to flourish is not what it is for your life to flourish. I will never be an Olympic gymnast, but I do not take my life to be any less flourishing in virtue of that fact. Simone Biles, on the other hand, is (to all appearances) living a flourishing life, and I think it would be odd for any explanation of that fact to not reference her achievements as a gymnast.[69]

If a life goes better when an agent achieves their goals, then it follows that flourishing can turn on facts which will be unobservable to that agent. Sometimes our actions will have gone well only if certain conditions are met which we will never come to know. The clearest instances of this will be when the achievement of our goals is not determined until after our deaths. FDR is widely considered one of the greatest presidents, yet he could not have known this would be the case given he died before the conclusion of WW2 and the ensuing postwar dominance of the U.S. Had FDR instead left a legacy of political instability and economic

---

[68] I focus on the notion of flourishing here in order to sidestep the debate over what well-being consists in. Specifically, as Keller notes (Keller, 2018. 22), mental-state theorists who identify well-being solely with a person's subjective experience may still be amenable to the claims made here regarding flourishing (Kawall, 1999. 385-386). For more on well-being see (Crisp, 2021).

[69] I take Keller to be arguing something like this point in (Keller, 2014. 193-196). Keller argues more broadly for the view that welfare is connected to the achievement of goals in (Keller, 2009) and (Keller, 2004a).

decline, then he would instead have been assessed as a total failure. This is despite his being totally unaware in either scenario.

It is not, however, just the unknown results of our actions that can alter whether or not we achieve our goals. Sometimes, our goals are aimed towards people, specifically our friends, having certain beliefs about us. I do not merely wish my friends to act as if they respect me; I desire that they actually do. There is a noted difference in how my life has gone, for instance, if all the people I see as my friends are merely pretending for some elaborate coordinated prank versus if they genuinely see me as a good person worthy of their time. This is true even if I never come to discover their true intentions, and my so-called friends continue the act until my passing and thereby never act differently. It is the difference between the obituary correctly reading “friends hold heartfelt funeral” versus “actors celebrate pulling off the world's strangest joke”.

Sometimes our goals regarding how our friends view us will be more specific than merely being respected as a good friend. If I have set myself the goal of being a good philosopher, for instance, then it will be my goal that I should not only produce good philosophy, but also that others will respect me in my capacity as a philosopher. Should I die while being thought of as a mediocre philosopher, then I will not have achieved all my goals even if I deserved higher approval. My life will have gone worse as a result.

With those claims established, we can now derive the CSA for doxastic partiality. What has been shown is that whether or not our lives go well can hinge on others having certain beliefs about us. It is in our interests, therefore, that these beliefs actually be formed. As Keller

points out, good friends have special concern for the interests of one another.[70] That it is in our interests to have our friends hold certain beliefs can therefore confer on those friends a reason to form said beliefs. This then amounts to a reason for good friends to form doxastically partial beliefs on the premise that they will not always have the evidence necessary to justify the beliefs that we aim for them to hold.

This final premise, that the beliefs we desire our friends have will be ones for which they may not have sufficient evidence, is borne out in at least two types of scenarios. There will be instances in which I do not yet have the evidence to epistemically justify believing in my friend's abilities, and yet it will be in my friend's interests that I hold said beliefs. The case of the poet inviting you to their open mic is a prime example of this kind. The second are cases where I do not have the expertise required to have a belief justified by the evidence. Philosophy can be like this; not all my friends are philosophers, and therefore lack the training on which to have an authoritative opinion on my abilities. Nonetheless, it matters to me that they respect me as a philosopher, and thus any beliefs they form which satisfy that desire cannot be justified on the basis of their evidence.

If, as the CSA shows, we have an interest in our friends forming doxastically partial beliefs regarding us and this concern generates for our friends a reason to form those beliefs, then we can address the concern mentioned at the end of 8.2.1. Recall that one concern that might be had with the VCA was that agents would not, as a matter of course, legitimately expect their friends to be doxastically partial. The CSA pushes back against that worry; we can expect agents to legitimately expect partial beliefs from their friends given that it makes a material difference to the agent's flourishing that their friends believe in this way. This point follows

[70] (Keller, 2018. 25-26)

on the assumption that agents will typically aim to not just achieve their goals but to be recognised for achieving them.

The CSA also fits nicely with the limits on partiality suggested in 8.2.1. It may well be the case that some agents do not have a goal of recognition or else aim to only be judged on the evidence available. The friends of these agents will therefore not have any reason to form partial beliefs, at least none arising from the agent's goals, given the agent has no goal for which partial beliefs would satisfy.

An objector could target the CSA by questioning why forming a goal regarding how people believe of me would thereby give my friends a reason to follow along. The idea that my friends have special concerns for my interest in general has some appeal. The fact that I see some strangers waiting for a bus gives me no reason to stop for them. On the other hand, if a friend is there, then their interest in getting where they are going gives me a reason to help.

By appealing to the existence of doxastic wronging, the proponent of the CSA can appeal to more than just this analogy to action. At a basic level, one could make the same point as I pushed regarding the value of accepting doxastic wronging for the VCA. My general goal of avoiding being doxastically wronged can confer on my friends a reason to form partial beliefs as a general instance of their interest in maintaining a good friendship by avoiding wrongdoing.

I take the connection between doxastic wronging and the CSA to be more specific than this, however. This emerges from the connection between a life going well and an agent not being wronged. One way that an agent's life might go poorly, I would suggest, is if that agent is a

constant subject of wrongdoing. If that is the case, then being doxastically wronged can inhibit one's ability to flourish. This ought to sharpen the intuition that my goals regarding how people believe of me *can* confer on others a reason to form partial belief especially when, in doing so, the belief they form avoids doxastic wronging and thereby does not inhibit my flourishing. In these cases of potential doxastic wronging, my friend may have a reason to form a partial belief not just because in doing so they satisfy my goals and further my flourishing, but also because they avoid wronging me and damaging the chances of my life going well.

This is not to suggest that in all cases wherein I have a goal regarding how people believe on me that those agents will be at risk of doxastically wronging me if they fail to conform. The CSA merely shows that forming a goal confers a reason on my friends to believe in a way that may be partial, and this reason may be defeated. It may be, for instance, that my friend cannot believe as I would wish due to overwhelming evidence to the contrary.[71] In that case, they will not have wronged me, given that I cannot legitimately expect that which they cannot do. What should be clear is that the conclusion of the CSA (that friends have reason to be doxastically partial to one another to aid in their flourishing) can be strengthened by highlighting cases where beliefs do not merely constitute an improvement in an agent's life but also an avoidance of their life going worse.

8.3 Against Doxastic Partiality - Overgeneration Argument

I have so far shown that the doxastic partialist can strengthen their positive arguments by incorporating doxastic wrong theory and interpersonal rationality. We now turn to the work

[71] It is worth noting that such cases can arise despite my friend's best efforts. They may attend to the evidence as charitably as possible, yet still come out believing against my wishes.

that this endorsement can do for the partialist in regards to refuting their detractors. We will focus on an overgeneration argument due to (Goldberg, 2022), but this should not be interpreted as implying that this is the only objection against which these theories will prove fruitful.[72]

Those points aside, let us turn to Goldberg's overgeneration argument. Goldberg suggests that the arguments for partiality given above will overgenerate such that they work as an argument for partiality in nearly every walk of our interpersonal lives (ibid. 250-258). We will focus on the objection as applied to the VCA, but the objection can be adjusted to target the CSA. In either case, the response I suggest on behalf of the partialist will push back against the overgeneration.

Goldberg's strategy is to apply the structure of the VCA to a relationship that need not involve friendship. He focuses on the example of work colleagues in a research team (ibid. 251). The goal is to show that the VCA will apply in the work context just as well as it did in the context of friendship. The objection then, will be that we should expect this result to follow (overgenerate) in a multitude of other relationships. This overgeneration should worry the partialist for a couple reasons. First, one appeal of the partialist's position was that it can claim to explain what is doxastically special about friendship. If their arguments overgeneralise to many other relationships, then there will turn out to have been nothing special, doxastically speaking, about friendship, at least as regards partiality. Second, the claim that we should be partial in most of our relationships is a far stronger and prima facie implausible claim than the partialist initially intended to make.[73]

[72] As indicated in Fn 66.

[73] Although some theorists have argued that a widespread "faith in humanity" is a virtue to which we should strive. See (Preston-Roedder, 2013).

As stated, Goldberg intends to apply the structure of the VCA to the context of work relationships. We will start with the descriptive claims. It should be clear enough that, typically, partial action in a work context helps the functioning of the team. Donuts in the lunchroom, drinks after work, and end of year parties are all partial activities that are typical of a work environment. When I partake in these activities, I am acting as a good member of my team and, importantly, I can do all of this without entering into a friendship with any one member.

It also appears that the descriptive claim will hold for partial attitudes. Part of having the team be well functioning includes believing well of each other. Imagine that salacious rumours are being spread regarding a particular team member. If the rest of the team comes to believe these rumours, then we should expect the working relationship between that member and the rest to break down. This is in part because of how believing these rumours will impact the actions of the team, such as avoiding eye contact in the hallway, not receiving an office birthday card, etc. However, insofar as the partialist was able to point towards evidence that it was the belief itself that mattered in the case of friendship, Goldberg will be able to make the same move in this work context. We can expect it to matter to a given agent not just that their coworkers act cordially, but that they are actually believed in.[74] To not be believed in by your coworkers, therefore, is to suffer a worse workplace relationship. It is not a matter of idle curiosity to the maligned party as to why they are being given the cold shoulder. Rather, in finding out what the rest of the team believes, they will likely feel an additional grievance over and above how they are being treated.

[74] An agent may genuinely assert "I don't care what those people in the office think!", but I take them to be setting themselves apart from what is normal (thus the need for the assertion).

Given these descriptive claims seem to hold as they did in the case for friendship, the objector can then ask why we should not expect the normative claims to hold in the same fashion. Afterall, we presumably value good workplace relationships, so why should we be expected to wish them to be any different? The argument then follows in just the same way as it did in the VCA. The workplace relationships that we value are just those which exhibit partiality in attitude and belief. To judge doxastic partiality to be normatively questionable, therefore, is to wish away this relationship that we value, which is a move we should not be expected to make without compelling reason. The objector then concludes that the VCA works just as well as an argument for partiality in the workplace as it did for friendship. The worry then, is that this will generate to a whole host of relationships (business partnerships, partisan relations, etc), a far greater claim than the partialists initially intended to make.

Now, for Goldberg's argument to have the required bite, it will have to be that the arguments for partiality imply a need for *widespread* partiality in everyday life. It cannot just be that the arguments imply that we ought to be partial to some extent; I imagine most partialists would be perfectly happy with the idea that our work colleagues should be afforded some degree of partiality. The result is only a concern if we ought to be just as partial to colleagues as we are to friends (or at least, to some similar degree). To reject the overgeneration argument we therefore need not require a rejection of the descriptive claim. Rather, we merely need to show why we can expect this partiality to be less in degree than in the case of friendship.

This is where the link between doxastic wronging theory and the arguments for partiality proves to be useful. Specifically, by considering the notion of legitimate expectation setting, we can see that whatever partiality is to be typically legitimately expected in a good workplace will come in a lesser degree than is typically expected in friendship. First, note

that if Goldberg does successfully extend the demands of partiality to work relationships, then you might expect the capacity for doxastic wrongs to also extend given the connection between partiality and wrong avoidance. However, it would be surprising if they were similar. Prima facie, there is more capacity for doxastic wronging between friends than work colleagues. This is not surprising given that doxastic wrongs are caused by expectation violations and we typically expect more from the former than we do the latter.[75]

One clear reason to anticipate that expectations will differ between friendship and workplace is due to the way that expectations in those contexts are set. My friends and I have not formally agreed on what to expect from one another. Rather, what is legitimately expected follows from, among other things, the sort of values that we know each of us to have, how we have acted previously, and the culture of friendship that we find ourselves in. Explicit agreements might arise, but they are exceptions to the rule. Perhaps it may be too ambiguous as to what the expectations are or because we have previously come into conflict over some issue. Good workplaces are not like this. There will typically be some formal element that sets expectations on how you will act around colleagues. Additionally, informal elements will be more predominantly set by the preexisting culture and less susceptible to change by one agent. If I am new in a place of work, I might ask what is expected of me, rather than if I have made a new friend where instead I can ask what we would like to expect of one another.

None of the above is by necessity; there may be workplaces that set expectations in a way very typical of friendships and vice versa. As a trend, however, I think we should expect the method by which expectations are set and, partially as a result, the content of those

[75] Indeed, even if Goldberg wishes to reject the existence of doxastic wrongs, I still think he must accept that we expect more of friends than we do work colleagues. If this were not the case, then I lose grip on what is supposed to be implausible about overgenerating the partiality argument.

expectations to differ. For one thing, what we need from a workplace versus a friendship tends to differ greatly. While I might want professionalism, career support, and security from a workplace, I can coherently want none of these things from my friends. It follows then, that the expectations that we legitimately set in creating these environments should differ.

This matters for Goldberg's argument because a divergence in which legitimate expectations are constitutive in the workplace versus a friendship implies that the form and extent of partiality that is constitutive in both cases will also diverge. If what I legitimately expect of you regarding your beliefs is different if you are my colleague versus a friend, then that will change your ability to doxastically wrong me and thus the type of doxastic partiality you are expected to adhere to. Now the facts of the case will certainly matter. It may well be the case that the arguments extend to some degree, but that in itself need not constitute a problem. There are degrees to which we can be partial and it may well be that we ought to be more partial to work colleagues than we are to strangers and more partial to friends than we are to work colleagues. For Goldberg's overgeneration argument to go through, it would require that it go through to the same extent for all relationships. The existence of doxastic wrongs helps show why that is not the case.

It should be clear at this point that the partialist has much to gain by endorsing the theories defended in this thesis. I take the common theme of this benefit to be explanatory. By endorsing legitimate expectation based doxastic wrongs the partialist stands to gain a full account of why it is that partiality is often, but not always, present in our relationships. Additionally, the endorsement of interpersonal rationality allows the partialist an explanation of what can be good about partial beliefs and when exactly this is the case. In making these moves, the partialist can explain why it might be that some friendships are not

part-constituted by partiality. That we insist and are happy with one another never engaging in partial reasoning is sufficient to show that partiality does not part-constitute the relationship. I will not labour the point further here, but I note that, given the progress made here, that there is scope for other theories in social epistemology to gain by endorsing my view.

9. Conclusion

Recall the case with which we began. In that case, you have believed epistemically rationally, given your evidence, that your friend would not succeed. In believing this, you spurred the end of your friendship. We noted a tension between your being rational and your ability to maintain your friendship. We are now in a position to explain that tension. Doxastic attitudes have the capacity to constitute a distinct wrong (section 2). Your believing your friend would not succeed, at least on some tellings of the story, is an instance of a doxastic wrong against your friend. Thus, when they discover your belief, they discover that you have wronged them.

Your belief wrongs your friend because it constitutes a violation of a legitimate expectation which your friend held regarding your belief (section 3). Your friend can have a legitimate expectation on how you believe because they can legitimately expect that you reason about them from the participant stance. That is, they can legitimately expect that you reason about them as an agent capable of determining their fate rather than an object at the whims of the publishing industry. They can legitimately expect this because that is how you would maintain respect for them as their friend. Things might have been different, they might have legitimately expected your objective assessment. However, that was not the sort of relationship they were interested in.

Your insistence that you have been epistemically rational is to miss the point. In aiming to further your relationship with your friend, you have engaged in an interpersonal project (Section 4). When engaging in an interpersonal project, your belief is to be assessed in terms of whether or not it furthers social aims, rather than if it is true or based on good evidence. So there is something to be said against your belief that your friend would fail. Namely, that it

reflects a lack of faith in their abilities as an agent and thus will cause them to feel wronged when they discover it. In forming your belief this way, you may have been being epistemically rational, but you were also interpersonally irrational.

Interpersonal rationality is a normatively significant notion to which you are answerable in your capacity as a social being (Section 5). Of course, to say this is not to deny the normative importance of epistemic rationality. Rather, it is to put epistemic rationality in its proper place. Yours is a situation where interpersonal and epistemic rationality come into conflict. I have suggested that the demands of interpersonal rationality outweigh those of epistemic rationality given the value of maintaining your relationship.

You might complain that interpersonal reasons are of the wrong kind for you to have formed an interpersonally rational belief, but this objection will not suffice as an excuse (Section 6). Interpersonal reasons could have motivated you to consider and focus evidence that your friend would have succeeded. You could come to view their determination as evidence for their success. That believing in your friend would have required ignoring some of the evidence to the contrary does not show that you could not have believed in them. Rather, it indicates that focussing on that evidence may have been a mistake.

Alternatively, you might wish to complain that you had no way of knowing that your belief would wrong them. This will not work as a justification, given that, even if you could not determine whether or not your belief would wrong, you could still have inferred that your friend wanted you to trust them (Section 7). In failing to believe in your friend, you revealed that you could not be relied upon to have faith in them in tough circumstances. This is a factor you could have reasonably assessed as being present regardless of the presence of doxastic wrongs.

I take this to be a comprehensive account of what goes wrong in a vast number of cases where one agent fails to have faith in another. This account, based on the Strawsonian notion of legitimate expectation, is explanatorily powerful. As we have seen, it can do work in areas of social epistemology beyond doxastic wronging. Such as in the case of doxastic partiality (Section 8).

By delineating interpersonal rationality as distinct from epistemic rationality, the place that our doxastic attitudes play in our social world becomes much clearer. We can explain why it is the case that what it is for me to be friends with you might be quite different from what it is for you to be friends with someone else. We can make sense of the demand we may feel to put faith in our friends and the feeling that something is wrong with our beliefs when we do not. Perhaps most importantly, we can better grasp what being a good friend involves, while squaring that standard with what it is to be rational.

Bibliography

- Arpaly, Nomy & Brinkerhoff, Anna (2018). Why Epistemic Partiality is Overrated. Philosophical Topics 46 (1):37-51.

- Baril, Anne (2022). Doxastic Harm. Midwest Studies in Philosophy 46:281-306.

- Basu, Rima (2019a). Radical moral encroachment: The moral stakes of racist beliefs. Philosophical Issues 29 (1):9-23.
    - (2019b). What We Epistemically Owe To Each Other. Philosophical Studies 176 (4):915–931.
    - (2021). A Tale of Two Doctrines: Moral Encroachment and Doxastic Wronging. In Jennifer Lackey (ed.), Applied Epistemology. Oxford University Press. pp. 99-118.
    - (2023a). Morality of Belief I: How Beliefs Wrong. Philosophy Compass (7):1-10.
    - (2023b). The Ethics of Expectations. In Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics, vol 13. Oxford University Press. pp. 149-169.

- Basu, Rima & Schroeder, Mark (2019). Doxastic Wronging. In Brian Kim & Matthew McGrath (eds.), Pragmatic Encroachment in Epistemology. Routledge. pp. 181-205.

- Bolinger, Renée Jorgensen (2020). Varieties of Moral Encroachment. Philosophical Perspectives 34 (1):5-26.

- Brown, Jessica (2013). Impurism, Practical Reasoning, and the Threshold Problem. Noûs 47 (1):179-192.

- Choi, Sungho and Fara, Michael (2021). "Dispositions". The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/dispositions/>.

- Clifford, W. K. (1877). The Ethics of Belief. In William Kingdon Clifford (ed.), The ethics of belief and other essays. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, (1999). pp. 70-97.

- Crawford, Lindsay (2017). Believing the best: on doxastic partiality in friendship. Synthese 196 (4):1575-1593.

- Crisp, Roger (2021). "Well-Being". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/well-being/>.

- Dannenberg, Jorah (2018). Lying Among Friends. In Eliot Michaelson & Andreas Stokke (eds.), Lying: Language, Knowledge, Ethics, and Politics. pp. 206-226

- Enoch, David & Spectre, Levi (forthcoming). There is no such thing as doxastic wrongdoing. Philosophical Perspectives.

- Fantl, Jeremy & McGrath, Matthew (2009). Knowledge in an uncertain world. New York: Oxford University Press. Edited by Matthew McGrath.

- Goldberg, Sanford C. (2019). Against epistemic partiality in friendship: value-reflecting reasons. Philosophical Studies 176 (8):2221-2242.
    - (2022). Epistemic Partiality and Value Commitments. In Diane Jeske (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship. New York, NY: Routledge. pp. 247-260

- Hazlett, Allan (2013). A Luxury of the Understanding: On the Value of True Belief. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
    - (2017). On the special insult of refusing testimony. Philosophical Explorations 20 (sup1):37-51.

- Haziza, Eliran (2023). Norms of Inquiry. Philosophy Compass 18 (12): e12952.

- Hieronymi, Pamela (2005). The Wrong Kind of Reason. Journal of Philosophy 102 (9):437 - 457.
    - (2006). Controlling Attitudes. Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 87(1):45-74.

    - (2008). Responsibility for Believing. Synthese 16(3):357-373.

- Jackson, Elizabeth & Fritz, James (2021). Belief, Credence, and Moral Encroachment. Synthese 199 (1-2):1387–1408.

- Johnson King, Zoe & Babic, Boris (2020). Moral Obligation and Epistemic Risk. Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics 10:81-105.

- Kawall, Jason (1999). The experience machine and mental state theories of well-being. Journal of Value Inquiry 33 (3):381-387.

- Keller, Simon (2004a). Welfare and the achievement of goals. Philosophical Studies 121 (1):27-41.
    - (2004b). Friendship and Belief. Philosophical Papers 33 (3):329-351.
    - (2009). Welfare as success. Noûs 43 (4):656-683.
    - (2014). “Posthumous Harm.” In Luper, Steven (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Life and Death. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 181-197
    - (2018). Belief for Someone Else’s Sake. Philosophical Topics 46 (1):19-35.
    - (2022). Are You a Good Friend?. In Diane Jeske (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship. New York, NY: Routledge. pp. 301-310

- Lindemann, Hilde (2014). Holding and Letting Go: The Social Practice of Personal Identities., US: Oup Usa.

- Marušić, Berislav (2015). Evidence and Agency Norms of Belief for Promising and Resolving. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Marušić, Berislav & White, Stephen (2018). How Can Beliefs Wrong?: A Strawsonian Epistemology. Philosophical Topics 46 (1):97-114.

- Moran, Richard (2005). Getting told and being believed. Philosophers' Imprint 5:1-29.

- Nelson, Mark T. (2010). We Have No Positive Epistemic Duties. Mind 119 (473):83-102.

- Paul, Sarah K. & Morton, Jennifer M. (2018). Believing in Others. Philosophical Topics 46 (1):75-95.
    - (2018b). Grit. Ethics 129 (2):175-203.

- Preston-Roedder, Ryan (2013). Faith in Humanity. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 87 (3):664-687.

- McPherson, Tristram (2011). Against quietist normative realism. Philosophical Studies 154 (2):223-240.

- Osborne, Robert Carry (2020). What do we epistemically owe to each other? A reply to Basu. Philosophical Studies 178 (3):1005-1022.

- Railton, Peter (1986). Moral realism. Philosophical Review 95 (2):163-207

  .

- Rinard, Susanna (2019). Equal treatment for belief. Philosophical Studies 176 (7):1923-1950.

- Ross, Angus (1986). Why Do We Believe What We Are Told? Ratio (1):69-88.

- Schroeder, Mark (2012). The Ubiquity of State-Given Reasons. Ethics 122 (3):457-488.
    - (2018). When Beliefs Wrong. Philosophical Topics 46 (1):115-127.
    - (2019). Persons as Things, in Mark Timmons (ed.), Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics Volume 9. pp. 95-115

- Shah, Nishi (2006). A new argument for evidentialism. Philosophical Quarterly 56 (225):481–498.

- Sher, George (2021). A Wild West of the Mind. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

- Strawson, Peter (1962). Freedom and Resentment. In Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays. Routledge, 2008. pp. 1-28

- Stroud, Sarah (2006). Epistemic partiality in friendship. Ethics 116 (3):498-524.

    - (2022). Friendship and Epistemic Partiality. In Diane Jeske (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship. New York, NY: Routledge. pp. 233-246

- Worsnip, Alex (2021). Can Pragmatists Be Moderate? Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 102 (3):531-558.