

Prejudiced Beliefs Based on the Evidence: Responding to a Challenge for Evidentialism

Abstract: According to evidentialism, what is epistemically rational to believe is determined by evidence alone. So, assuming that prejudiced beliefs are irrational, evidentialism entails that they must not be properly based on the evidence. Recently, philosophers have been interested in cases of beliefs that seem to undermine evidentialism: these are beliefs that seem both prejudiced (and, thus, irrational) and properly based on the evidence (and, thus, rational). In these cases, a believer has strong statistical evidence that most members of a social group have some property and then comes to believe that an individual member of that social group will likely have that property. For example, a server at a restaurant has statistical evidence that most Black diners tip less than average and then comes to believe that a particular Black diner will likely tip less than average. The goal of this paper is to defend evidentialism from the challenge posed to it by beliefs like the server's by developing a plausible evidentialist account that explains away these conflicting intuitions.

It is widely assumed that prejudice – racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and the like – necessarily involves some sort of epistemic flaw: prejudice misconstrues reality, it neglects relevant information, it misleads and misinterprets and invites fallacious reasoning. Correspondingly, prejudiced beliefs are widely assumed to be epistemically irrational. This assumption will be our starting point.

According to a common view about epistemic rationality, only evidential considerations get a say in what is epistemically rational to believe: S's belief is rational iff S's evidence supports its propositional content and it is properly based on that evidence. Call this view evidentialism about epistemic rationality (*evidentialism* for short).¹

Since prejudiced beliefs are epistemically irrational, evidentialists have to say that prejudiced beliefs must not be properly based on evidence that supports it. Paradigmatic prejudiced beliefs fit nicely within an evidentialist framework. Consider, for example, the anti-Semite's belief that Jews are conspiring for world domination or the sexist's belief that Jack must be smarter than Jill. Beliefs like these go against the evidence and so evidentialists can accurately categorize them as irrational and prejudiced.

¹ A few terminological notes are in order. "Evidentialism" is used to pick out several different views in contemporary epistemology. Throughout the paper, "evidentialism" exclusively picks out this account of epistemic rationality. Importantly, this account concerns doxastic rationality, rather than propositional rationality. I will use "rationality" to refer to epistemic rationality of this sort from here on. "Evidence" is meant, broadly, to include all truth-related considerations. A belief "based on the evidence" is sometimes used as shorthand for a belief that's properly based on evidence that supports it.

But recently, philosophers have been interested in cases of belief that seem to undermine evidentialism. These are cases of belief that seem to be both prejudiced and properly based on the evidence. In these cases, believers have strong statistical evidence that members of a certain social group have some property and then come to believe that an individual member of that social group will likely have that property. Here are is one such case.

The Server Spencer works as a server at a restaurant. He sensed that White diners tipped more than Black diners. He did a bit of research online, and found a well-documented social trend that Black diners tip substantially below average. Spencer weighs the evidence before reaching his belief that Black diners tip substantially below average. A Black diner, Jamal, enters Spencer's restaurant and dines in a booth outside of Spencer's section. Spencer believes that Jamal will likely tip below average.²

There are many cases like The Server. Imagine a business consultant believing that the woman he sees walking out of a corner office is likely an administrative assistant given evidence that the vast majority of women who work at that office are administrative assistants. Or imagine a police officer believing that a Hispanic male from an inner-city neighborhood is likely a gang member given evidence that most Hispanic males from that neighborhood belong to gang.³

Some philosophers appeal to cases like The Server in order to challenge evidentialism.⁴ This challenge starts with two intuitions about beliefs like Spencer's. The first intuition is that Spencer's belief is racist, which entails that it's irrational. The second intuition is that Spencer's belief is properly based on his evidence. If both of these intuitions are veridical and Spencer's belief is irrational but properly based on his evidence, then evidentialism is false.

To respond to this challenge, evidentialists must account for these intuitions. In other words, evidentialists need to explain why beliefs like Spencer's seem to be both prejudiced and properly based

² This is an adapted version of a case introduced by Basu (2019b). The adaption is from Gardiner (2018).

³ For discussions of such cases, see Basu (2019a, 2019b, 2019c), Basu and Schroeder (2019), Begby (2013, 2018), Bolinger (2020), Gardiner (2018), Gendler (2011), Moss (2018), and Schroeder (2018).

⁴ These philosophers go on to argue that cases like The Server call for a new account of epistemic rationality that makes room for morality: what is epistemically rational to believe is determined, in part, by moral considerations. This paper, however, will engage with only the negative part of their argument (against evidentialism) rather than the positive part (for moral encroachment).

evidence that supports it if they, in fact, are not. My goal in this paper is to develop such a response by offering an account of mistaken intuitions.

Moving forward, it's important to bear in mind that cases like *The Server* are not merely interesting epistemologically, but significant morally: they center on a type of hurtful experience had by real people, and relate to number of moral issues such as racial profiling and implicit bias that bring real harm. So, although the main focus here is on the epistemic dimension of these cases, extra care and sensitivity to the moral dimension are called for. It's worth emphasizing at the start, then, that the account of mistaken intuitions to be developed is not intended to get believers like Spencer off the moral hook. In fact, I will conclude by arguing that – even if the beliefs themselves don't happen to be prejudiced – such believers may be morally criticizeable in a variety of ways.

1. Prejudiced Belief

It will be helpful to begin by looking at what evidentialists can say about prejudiced beliefs in general, and about the specific beliefs in question in cases like *The Server* in particular. A few clarifications are in order first. Other than the theoretical assumption that prejudiced beliefs are irrational, I will rely primarily on non-technical, everyday conceptions of prejudice and prejudiced belief. So, nothing more needs to be said about them at a general level upfront.

More does need to be said, however, about the specific beliefs are in question. In cases like *The Server*, believers have a basic belief that ascribes some property (P) to a targeted social group (G), and a derivative belief ascribing P to an individual member of G (J). For example, Spencer believes that Black diners tip substantially below average (his basic belief) and that Jamal will likely tip below average (his derivative belief). Those who appeal to cases like *The Server* to challenge evidentialism focus mainly on the derivative beliefs; they will be our main focus, too.

Notice that derivative beliefs are qualified with “likely”. This is important because an unqualified derivative belief automatically goes beyond the evidence. Evidence suggesting that most Gs are P does not firmly suggest that a randomly selected G *is* P, but it does firmly suggest that that a randomly selected G is *likely* P. So, in order to avoid begging the question of whether the beliefs in question are based on

evidence that support them, I focus on qualified derivative beliefs, even though many derivative beliefs out in the world are unqualified.⁵

With that in mind, let's turn to what evidentialism can say generally about prejudiced belief. Remember that, according to evidentialism, what is rational to believe is determined only by evidential considerations. If prejudiced beliefs are irrational, evidentialists say that there must be some evidential reason why. On evidentialism, then, it's essential to prejudiced beliefs that they are not properly based on evidence that supports them. Given this, a natural way for evidentialists to approach prejudiced beliefs is to posit something in their causal history that explains why prejudiced beliefs are irrational. Prejudiced beliefs, evidentialists may contend, are directly caused, at least in part, by some sort of prejudice. And since beliefs directly caused by prejudice can't be based properly on evidence that supports them, the thought goes, prejudiced beliefs are necessarily epistemically irrational.

This approach allows evidentialists to render the right verdict about beliefs that are caused by *internal* prejudice. Internal prejudice amounts to something like ill will or a lack of good will towards G and, derivatively, its members, which involves various desires and cares that distort belief formation and maintenance.⁶ The sexist's desire to keep women in their place can cause him to feel threatened by or protective of women which, in turn, can cause sexist beliefs – for example, the belief that women are unfit for high political office despite evidence that clearly suggests otherwise.

This approach also allows evidentialists to render the right verdict about prejudiced beliefs caused by *external* prejudice. External prejudice amounts to something like culturally prominent stereotypes and evaluative biases about G and, derivatively, its members. These stereotypes and biases can subconsciously distort beliefs when encoded by a believer.⁷ Encoded stereotypes about women, for

⁵ See section 4 of Gardiner (2018) for a helpful discussion of this point.

⁶ Arpaly (2003) and Arpaly and Schroeder (2014) develop a volitional-based account of prejudiced belief. They argue that *all* prejudiced beliefs are based on ill will or a lack of good will. Such accounts echo J.L.A Garcia's volitional account of racism (which we might extend to other forms of prejudice such as sexism and homophobia). See Garcia (1996, 1997, 1999).

⁷ Encoded stereotypes and biases might be thought to constitute implicit biases. For a helpful discussion of the epistemic impact of implicit bias, see Gendler (2011) and Egan (2011). For a helpful discussion about the psychology of implicit bias, see Devine (2009).

example, may cause an employer to believe that Joe's application is more impressive than Joanne's application even though they are equally impressive.⁸

Beliefs directly caused even just in part on internal or external prejudice are not properly based on the evidence, and so evidentialists say they are irrational. Paradigmatic instances of these beliefs fly in the face of widely available evidence, which makes it clear to those of us evaluating them that they likely are not properly based on evidence that supports them. They are also uncharitable, which makes it clear that they are likely the result of internal or external prejudice instead of some other, morally benign distorting influence.

So, on an approach like this, evidentialists can correctly categorize as irrational many important prejudiced beliefs. But what, on this approach, can evidentialists say about beliefs like Spencer's that seem to be prejudiced but are also backed by the believer's evidence? Evidentialists must admit that Spencer's evidence supports his belief about Jamal. After all, statistical evidence that supports the belief that most members of a given group have some property derivatively supports the belief that a randomly selected member of that group likely has that property. But, since it's possible for a belief to be supported by a believer's evidence while not being properly based on it,⁹ evidentialism can accommodate at least some prejudiced beliefs that are supported by the evidence. These are evidentially-supported beliefs that are caused in part by internal or external prejudice.

Evidentialists can say, then, that there is a possibility that beliefs like Spencer's are prejudiced even though they are supported by the evidence. But, generally, if it's known that a belief is supported by the evidence, it's reasonable to assume that it is properly based on that evidence unless there is good reason to think otherwise. So, unless there is good reason to think that Spencer's belief is not properly based on his statistical evidence, evidentialism seems to be stuck without much else to say. If the beliefs in

⁸ The above characterization of internal and external prejudice is admittedly rough. In real life, the line between them is often blurry, and they interact in complicated ways: internal prejudice can cause and undergird external prejudice and vice versa. Growing up in a community marked by external prejudice against Black people, for example, can foster internal racism against Black people. And internal racism against Black people can lead to continued dissemination of harmful stereotypes and evaluative biases.

⁹ In other words, it's possible for a belief to be propositionally rational without being doxastically rational.

question are properly based on the evidence – and perhaps we should think they are – they are rational and, thus, not prejudiced, despite any intuitions to the contrary. But, if they are, instead, prejudiced, then they are not properly based on the evidence, again despite any intuitions to the contrary.

2. An Evidentialist Account of Mistaken Intuitions

This brings us back to the challenge to evidentialism posed by cases like *The Server*. The challenge starts with the intuitions that the beliefs in question are prejudiced (and, thus, irrational) and also are properly based on the evidence (and, thus, rational). To respond to this challenge, evidentialists must account for these intuitions – that is, they must explain why it seems to so many of us who are evaluating cases like *The Server* that the beliefs in question are prejudiced and properly based on evidence that supports them.

The aim of this section is to develop a plausible evidentialist account of why these intuitions are mistaken. Appealing to the complex socio-epistemic landscape in cases like *The Server*, I will argue that it is unclear whether the beliefs in question have a certain implicit conjunct, and it is ultimately this unclarity that gives rise to the two conflicting intuitions.

2.1 Two Possible Beliefs

The evidentialist account of mistaken intuitions starts with the claim that beliefs like Spencer's might have an implicit conjunct. The beliefs in question have the form *J is likely P*. The conjunct that's potentially in play is negatively evaluative and has the form *and this – likely being P – reflects poorly on J*. So, when looking at beliefs like Spencer's, there are two possible beliefs it could be: a nonevaluative belief without the implicit conjunct, and a negative belief with the implicit conjunct.¹⁰

¹⁰ It's worth noting here that the implicit conjunct may, instead, be thought of as forming a distinct belief without any substantial changes to the account that follows. In this case, the possibilities in play would be Spencer having only one of the two relevant beliefs (the belief that Jamal is likely to tip less than average) and Spencer having both of the relevant beliefs (the belief that Jamal is likely to tip less than average and the belief that *likely to tip less than average* reflects poorly on Jamal).

The beliefs in question have the conjunct if the believers take P as negative. By “negative properties”, I mean to refer to those properties that reflect poorly on the object to which they are ascribed: a negative property constitutes, signals, or flows from some vice or lack of virtue¹¹ and, thus, the object deserves a low evaluation in light of it. Negative properties, as I take them, are a subset of bad properties. *Being abusive* and *being abused* are both bad in some sense, but only *being abusive* is a negative property. That’s because being abusive reflects poorly on abusers, whereas being abused does not reflect poorly on survivors of abuse.

So, if S believes that J is likely P, and if S takes P as negative, then S also (implicitly) believes that likely being P reflects poorly on J. Applying this to Spencer’s belief: if Spencer takes *likely to tip below average* as negative, he not only believes that Jamal is likely to tip substantially below average, but also (implicitly) that this reflects poorly on Jamal.

2.2 The Salience of Both Beliefs

As cases like The Server are usually presented, we do not have enough information to determine whether or not the beliefs in question have the implicit conjunct. Instead, some features of these cases suggest that they do while other features suggest that do not. This renders both possible beliefs – the one with the implicit conjunct, and the one without – salient.

The most obvious feature suggesting that they do not have the conjunct is that the cases explicitly ascribe only the singular belief to the believers. Considering them at face value, then, this suggests that the beliefs in question lack the conjunct. Another such feature is the statistical evidence that is said to support the beliefs in question. Statistical evidence is merely descriptive evidence: it regards only the proportion of Gs who are P. This feature suggests that the beliefs in question are nonevaluative: after all, it is natural to think that the content of Spencer’s belief about Jamal, for example, reflects the nonevaluative nature of the evidence that he has to support it.

¹¹ The relevant virtue or vice may be nonmoral.

But there are other features of these cases that suggest that the beliefs *do* have the implicit conjunct. Any feature suggesting that the believers take P as negative also suggests that the implicit conjunct is in play. The properties in the cases like The Server – *likely to tip less than average* or *likely belonging to a gang*, for example – are often taken to reflect poorly on those to whom they are ascribed. Given this, it is natural for us to think that the believers take them as negative, too.

In addition, some features of these cases suggest, more specifically, that the believers take P to reflect poorly on J *qua* G. P is taken to reflect poorly on J *qua* G if P is taken to constitute, flow from, or signal a vice or lack of virtue characteristic of G that J, as a G, likely instantiates.¹² To get a good grasp on the features that suggest this, it will be helpful to have in mind an overview of the socio-epistemic landscape at hand.

The beliefs in question in cases like The Server ascribe P to J, an individual member of G; P is, in fact, common among members of G; and the believers have statistical evidence that supports P's commonness among G. This all raises the question, why P is common G? In many cases, how we interpret the believers to be answering this question informs how we view the beliefs in question. The correct answer to why P is common among G ultimately involves some social injustice suffered by Gs. For example, sociologists typically explain racial disparity in tipping in one of two ways, both of which trace back to anti-Black racism.¹³ The first explanation is that Black people tend to be unfamiliar with percentage-based tipping norms: due to low income levels that result from being subject to a long history of oppression, Black people do not dine at full-service restaurants as much. The second explanation is that servers systematically discriminate against Black diners.

That said, the relevant features of these cases give prominence to a different, mistaken answer to why P is common among G: that P is causally grounded in a vice or lack of virtue characteristic of G. The reason why this answer is salient in these cases has to do with the fact that the social groups targeted

¹² Characteristic features of G are stable and permanent, as opposed to superficial or incidental. They serve to identify G, help distinguish G from other social groups, and are instantiated by typical and, thus, most members of G.

¹³ See Brewster and Mallison (2009) for a helpful overview and critical discussion of the relevant sociological literature.

are marginalized. In particular, these groups have historically been characterized in negative ways that have been viewed as closely linked to the properties common among them. There is a storied history of thought that maligns Black people, for example, as inherently less virtuous.¹⁴ Although today's stereotypes about Black people may be less flagrant, they echo this thought.¹⁵

This feature invites us to think that the believers accept the mistaken answer to why P is common G and, by extension, that P reflects poorly on J *qua* G. Given the salience of the negative historical characterization of Black people, for example, we are invited to think that Spencer takes the tipping patterns of Black diners as grounded in something characteristically negative about Black people – specifically, as flowing from a moral defect (lack of generosity, perhaps) characteristic of Black people that Jamal, in turn, likely instantiates.

Notably, something similar can be said about the business consultant who believes that the woman walking out of the corner office is likely an assistant, and the police officer who believes the Hispanic male he sees on the street corner likely belongs to a gang. Given the all-too-familiar characterizations of women as hyper-emotional and irrational, and Hispanic men as violent, we are invited to think that these believers take such negative group characteristics as explaining why women are more likely to be assistants rather than executives and why Hispanic men from a certain part of town are more likely than not belong to a gang – though, once again, the correct explanation ultimately traces back to historic and continuing social injustices suffered by these groups.¹⁶ So the fact that the social groups targeted in cases like *The Server* are marginalized invites us to think not only that the believer takes P as negative, but also as reflecting poorly on J *qua* G.

Another feature that invites us to think the same thing has to do with the context of evaluation, rather than the content of the cases themselves – namely, these cases are typically evaluated within

¹⁴ Nussbaum (2015)

¹⁵ Gendler (2011) cites a 1995 study where participants were asked to name traits that were stereotypically associated with Black Americans. The most typical traits named were negative. See p. 43 of Gendler (2011) for discussion. The original study is from Devine and Elliot (1995).

¹⁶ See Okin (1989) for an insightful discussion of sexism's continued impact on women in the workplace. See Knox, Etter, and Smith (2018) for various discussions about the racial-oppression thesis, which says that social injustices suffered by racial minorities are a significant causal determinants of gang membership and activity.

discussions about prejudice. Two things about prejudice are of note here. First, prejudice tends to be negatively-valenced. Second, prejudice is always filtered through a group-level generalization: you can't be prejudiced against someone *qua* individual, but you can be prejudiced against someone *qua* Black person or woman or Muslim.¹⁷ Relatedly, a hallmark of everyday conceptions of racism and other forms of prejudice seems to be the thought that the targeted group has inherent negative characteristics – vices and lack of virtues – that make that group inferior to other groups in the same social category.¹⁸ Because of this, evaluating the beliefs in question in a context where prejudice in the foreground primes us to think that the believer not only takes P as negative, but also as grounded in a contextually-salient, group-level characteristics.

Given these last two features, it will now be assumed that the implicit conjunct that's potentially in play has the form *and this – likely being P – reflects poorly on J qua G*.

2.3 The Rise of Conflicting Intuitions

The salience of the possibility that the beliefs in question lack the implicit conjunct gives rise to the intuition that they are based on the evidence. For example, if Spencer's belief about Jamal lacks the implicit conjunct, then his statistical evidence that most Black diners tip substantially below average supports his belief. And, generally, if it is known that a belief is supported by the evidence, it is reasonable to assume that it is based on that evidence, unless there is good reason to think otherwise. Because of this, when we view them as singular and nonevaluative, beliefs like Spencer's strike us being based on the evidence.

The salience of the possibility that the beliefs in question have the implicit conjunct gives rise to the intuition that they are prejudiced. For example, if Spencer's belief about Jamal has the implicit conjunct,

¹⁷ This second thing about prejudice is important because we need to be able to distinguish prejudiced attitudes against particular people from other negative attitudes against particular people that arise from personal interactions with them. There is a difference between having ill will towards Joan *qua* woman, for example, and having ill will towards Joan *qua* individual-who-constantly-complains: the first amounts to prejudice, the second does not. See Begby for discussion.

¹⁸ This is indicated by standard dictionary definitions of the different forms of prejudice. For example, one of the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions of racism is "the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another."

it is not supported by the evidence and, thus, cannot be properly based on it. In order for the whole belief to be supported by the evidence, the implicit conjunct must be evidentially supported, but it is not. To see this, it'll be helpful to identify what sort of evidence would be needed in order for the conjunct to be supported. If it is true that P reflects poorly on J *qua* G, then P is linked to some lack of virtue of vice characteristic of G, and evidence that favors the truth of such a conjunct would suggest so. But Spencer's statistical evidence does not suggest that *likely to tip less than average* is linked to anything negative about Jamal, much less to anything characteristically negative about Black people that Jamal likely instantiates.

At the very least, then, we have reason to think that, if they have the implicit conjunct, the beliefs in question go *beyond* the evidence in an uncharitable direction. But we might also have reason to think that they go *against* it.¹⁹ If we have been envisioning Spencer in a multicultural society where he regularly interacts with Black people – they are his neighbors and friends and colleagues – then we have reason to think that he has plenty of evidence to counter the thought that Black people are, for example, characteristically less generous.

Whether these beliefs go beyond or against the evidence, they are not supported by the evidence and, thus cannot be properly based on it. And since they do so in an uncharitable direction, given the evidentialist approach discussed above, we have good reason to think that they have been influenced by prejudice. Because of all of this, when we view them as having the implicit conjunct, beliefs like Spencer's strike us as being prejudiced.

2.4 The Account

With all this in mind, an account of mistaken intuitions can now be offered. There is a fact of the matter about the content of the beliefs in question: they are either nonevaluative beliefs that lack the implicit conjunct or negative beliefs that have it. But, given the limited information presented in *The Server* and

¹⁹ S's belief goes beyond the evidence if S's evidence favors, on balance, the truth of its content but not to the degree required for rationality, or if S's evidence favors, on balance, the truth of some of its content and neither favors nor disfavors the rest. S's belief goes against the evidence if S's evidence favors, on balance, the negation of part or all of its content.

cases like it, those of us evaluating the beliefs in question are not in an epistemic position to identify what these facts are. Rather, the possibility of each belief is salient.

As we evaluate the beliefs in question, we do not consciously disambiguate these possibilities – for example, we do not think about Spencer’s belief about Jamal as possibly a singular, nonevaluative belief or possibly a conjunctive, negative belief. Rather, we just think about it simply as Spencer’s belief, its content solidified. We do, however, register the various features that favor the different possibilities, leading us either to subconsciously alternate between viewing Spencer’s belief as singular and nonevaluative and then viewing it as conjunctive and negative, or to subconsciously view it as both simultaneously. Viewing it the first way gives rise to the intuition that it is based on the evidence and viewing it the second way gives rise to the intuition that it is prejudiced. Since we explicitly think about it as being one belief, we incorrectly take both intuitions as being about one belief – Spencer’s belief about Jamal – not as intuitions about different possible beliefs.

2.5 The Upshot

Suppose this account plausible. How, exactly, does it help out evidentialism? Evidentialism cannot accommodate beliefs that are both prejudiced (and thus irrational) and properly based on evidence that supports them (and thus rational). But beliefs like Spencer’s intuitively seem to be what evidentialism says is impossible. If both of these intuitions are veridical, then evidentialism is incorrect, and a new account of the rationality of belief is needed that can accommodate these beliefs. But if these intuitions are mistaken – if it’s not the case that the beliefs in question are prejudiced and also properly based on the believers’ evidence – then evidentialism can accommodate them. And so, in the face of cases like *The Server*, an account of mistaken intuitions makes it reasonable for evidentialists to hang on to their view about epistemic rationality.

3. Case Variations: Testing the Account

If the account of mistaken intuitions offered above is correct, our intuitions about the beliefs in question will differ in variations of the cases at hand in which there are not mixed messages about their content

– in other words, variations in which it is clear whether or not it’s implicitly believed that P reflects poorly on J *qua* G. Consider the following two variations on The Server.

The Informed Server Spencer knows that, statistically, Black diners tip substantially below average and derivatively comes to believe that Jamal will likely tip below average. Spencer has recently read a lot about the historic and continued oppression of Black Americans. So, in addition to the relevant statistical information, he knows that they have been disadvantaged by structural racism for centuries and that this has led to systematic income inequality between Black American and White Americans. From his research, he knows that it is this income inequality, and not any lack of virtue, that ultimately explains the tipping patterns of Black Americans.

The Ignorant Server Spencer knows that, statistically, Black diners tip substantially below average and derivatively comes to believe that Jamal will likely tip below average. Despite daily interactions with his Black neighbors and coworkers that provide him with plenty of evidence to the contrary, Spencer believes that Black people are inherently less morally virtuous than White people. He believes that it is a lack of generosity that explains the tipping patterns of Black diners.

In both variations, Spencer believes that Jamal will likely tip below average. The beliefs that surround the belief in question, however, differ drastically from one variation to the next. The surrounding beliefs make it clear in each variation whether or not Spencer takes *likely to tip below average* as reflecting poorly on Jamal *qua* Black person: the features of the original case that suggest one way are underscored, and any remaining features that suggest the other way are overshadowed.

In The Informed Server, the surrounding beliefs make it clear that Spencer does not take *likely to tip below average* as flowing from something negative about Jamal as a Black person, and dispel any hint that he sees Black people in the negative light that cast by any contextually salient history of racism. In The Ignorant Server, the surrounding beliefs make it clear that Spencer takes *likely to tip below average* as flowing from a moral defect characteristic of Black people. It is clear, then, that the belief in question has the implicit conjunct in The Ignorant Server, but not in The Informed Server. By extension, it is clear that the other salient possibility – that it lacks the implicit conjunct – obtains in The Informed Server and not in The Ignorant Server.

These variations can serve as a confirmation test for the account of mistaken intuitions developed above. The account is confirmed if we have the intuitive responses that the account predicts for each variation. In the Informed Server, the only salient possibility is the singular, nonevaluative belief. So, regarding Informed Spencer’s belief, the account predicts that we retain the intuition that it is properly

based on his evidence and lose the intuition that it is prejudiced. In the Ignorant Server, the only salient possibility is the conjunctive, negative belief. So, regarding Ignorant Spencer's belief, the account predicts that we retain the intuition that it is prejudiced but lose the intuition that it is based on the evidence. And this is exactly how things seem. Informed Spencer's belief does not seem racist but does seem to be epistemically in-the-clear by evidentialist lights. By contrast, Ignorant Spencer's belief does seem racist but also seems epistemically problematic, stemming from the type of unsupported ideological commitments that tend to go hand-in-hand with internal racism.

These intuitive responses are enlightening. Of course, they confirm the account of mistaken intuitions. But, in so doing, they indicate something else important: just believing that Jamal will likely tip less than average is not, itself, automatically morally pernicious. If it were, then Informed Spencer's belief about Jamal would also seem racist. This, in turn, indicates that there's more going on than first meets the eye in the original version of *The Server* that is triggering our intuition about racism, which is exactly what that the account of mistaken intuitions seeks to identify – namely, tacit features suggesting that Spencer's belief has the implicit conjunct. It is by appealing to the different ways that these features as well as the relevant competing features are developed in each variation that evidentialists can predict – and explain – our differing intuitive responses. Because the features of these variations point univocally towards only one of the possible beliefs, we view the belief in question only through the lens of that possibility, which gives us the intuition that arises from viewing it in that way. Considerations about these variations, then, strengthen the account of mistaken intuitions.

4. Some Concluding Considerations: The Moral Dimension

We began with the intuitions that Spencer's belief about Jamal in the original version of *The Server* is prejudiced and also that it is properly based on evidence that supports it. Evidentialism cannot accommodate prejudiced beliefs that are properly based on the evidence because, on evidentialism, such beliefs would be both rational and irrational. But evidentialists can offer an account that explains away these intuitions. If plausible, this account disarms the challenge to evidentialism posed by cases like *The*

Server. And we do have some good reason to think it's plausible since it predicts and explains intuitive verdicts about relevant variations on The Server.

One of the virtues of the account of mistaken intuitions is that it is sensitive to the complexity of the socio-epistemic dimension of cases like The Server. In concluding, I want to emphasize the complexity of their moral dimension. This emphasis is important because it shows that – in addition to accounting for the mistaken intuitions – evidentialism can accommodate a robust and nuanced moral evaluation of these cases.

To start, it should be noted that cases like The Server have many morally significant aspects. Because of this, even if it were determined that the beliefs in question are properly based on the evidence and so are not prejudiced, believers like Spencer are not automatically in the moral clear. There are a number of moral questions whose answers contribute to a full moral evaluation of cases like The Server, but that are not settled by determining whether the beliefs in question are prejudiced. Let's explore two such issues: actions that may stem from the beliefs in question and attention directed towards their content.

When considering The Server, it's natural to wonder why Spencer occurrently comes to believe that Jamal is likely to tip less than average. One obvious reason might be that it's relevant to a decision about how to act. But, in The Server, it's stipulated that Jamal is sitting outside of Spencer's section. This stipulation was included because it makes it even harder for evidentialists to account for the mistaken intuitions – evidentialists can't try to explain away the intuition that the beliefs in question are prejudiced (or, more generally, morally problematic) by pointing to morally condemnable actions that the belief would likely cause. After all, if Spencer won't be interacting with Jamal, then his belief that Jamal will likely tip less than average won't be informing any relevant actions.

The main point here is not that, in a case without this stipulation, potential actions downstream from Spencer's belief can bolster the evidentialist account of mistaken intuitions. Rather, the main point is that these potential actions are morally significant in themselves: when the beliefs in question seem to recommend a course of action that risks harm to or disadvantages J, the moral status of the beliefs themselves – whether or not they are prejudiced – does not tell us whether it is morally permissible for

the believer to take that course of action. So, even if Spencer's belief about Jamal is not prejudiced, and supposing Jamal is sitting in Spencer's section, it may still be morally wrong for Spencer to give Jamal poorer service than he would give to a diner whom he does not believe is likely to tip less than average.

For another example, consider an HR manager who believes that Jenny – a young married female applicant whom he is interviewing – is likely to become pregnant soon after being hired in light of statistical evidence that most young married female applicants he's hired in the past have become pregnant in their first five years of employment.²⁰ Even if it the manager's belief lacks the implicit conjunct, and is properly based on his evidence and so is not prejudiced, it may still very well be morally wrong for him to count *statistically likely to become pregnant soon after being hired* as a strike against Jenny when deciding whom to hire.²¹ This shows that evidentialists have room to morally criticize some believers like Spencer even on the assumption that the *beliefs* in question are epistemically and morally in the clear.

Now let's return to cases where the belief in question does not seem likely to lead to a course of action that risks harm to J – cases like The Server in which Jamal is sitting outside of Spencer's section. For another example, suppose instead it's a low-level employee at the company – somebody with no say in the hiring process – who comes to believe in light of the relevant statistical information that Jenny, if hired, is likely to become pregnant soon after. Although morally problematic potential actions are not relevant in such cases, another moral issue is: the believers' attention. Supposing that Jamal's likely tipping proclivities are totally irrelevant to deciding how to act, why is Spencer thinking about this? Why does he seem to care about how much Jamal is likely to tip? It may seem odd that Spencer is seemingly so interested in the tipping patterns of Black diners that this is what comes to mind when he sees Jamal. Sure, there might be an innocuous explanation – for example, maybe Spencer just studied differing social customs among racial groups in his sociology class. But other, less innocuous explanations involving racist ideologies or attitudes seem more likely, or at least salient. And something similar can be said about the low-level employee.

²⁰This example is adapted from a case discussed in Schroeder (2018).

²¹ For empirical studies on pregnancy discrimination in hiring, see Cunningham and Macan (2007) and Becker, et al., (2019).

Again, the main point here is not that, in cases where potential morally condemnable actions downstream from the belief in question are not in play, evidentialists can bolster their account of mistaken intuitions by pointing to morally fishy attention patterns involved in occurrently having the beliefs in question. Rather, the main point is that these attention patterns are morally significant in themselves.²² Once again, this leaves evidentialists with room to morally criticize some believers in cases like *The Server* even on the assumption that the beliefs in question are not prejudiced. For example, even if Spencer's belief about Jamal itself isn't prejudiced, his attention patterns – manifested in him occurrently having that belief when its content isn't practically relevant – may nevertheless stem from racist attitudes. In this case, Spencer's attention patterns, but not his belief, would be racist. In addition, there may be moral norms that govern attention which, by occurrently having the beliefs in question, the believers violate. Perhaps, all else being equal, it's morally wrong to dwell on things about a person that are morally and practically irrelevant but incline us to think worse of that person, distract us from things that are relevant, or feed into false or harmful stereotypes about the groups to which that person belong.

In sum: cases like *The Server* are complicated, both morally and epistemically. Initial intuitions about the beliefs in question in these cases pose a challenge to evidentialism. But evidentialists can successfully respond to this challenge by developing an account of mistaken intuitions: conflicting features of such cases as originally presented muddy our intuitions about the beliefs in question. This account allows evidentialists to explain and predict intuitive responses to variations of these cases in which it's clear which of these features hold; this, in turn, lends further plausibility to the evidentialist diagnosis of what's going on in the original cases. What's more, evidentialism can support a sophisticated evaluation of the moral dimension of these cases over and above its account of the epistemic dimension. So, far from pressuring evidentialists to give up their view of epistemic rationality, cases like *The Server* fit comfortably within an evidentialist framework.

²² For one interesting discussion of the moral significance of attention, see Bommarito (2013) who argues that attention patterns are central to the virtue of modesty and the vice of immodesty.

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