Fault and No-fault Responsibility for Implicit Prejudice: A Space for Epistemic Agent Regret?

Normally, if one is seen to have made judgements that are significantly influenced by prejudicial bias, then one is epistemically at fault, so that epistemic blame would be justified, including self-blame. What about cases where the prejudice in question is an ‘implicit bias’ (unconscious, automatic, and possibly contrary to one’s beliefs)? Here too, even if our degree of control and awareness is very limited, we may well be blameworthy—compare character traits of which we’re unaware e.g. ‘implicit’ selfishness.

Are there circumstances where we may be guilty of implicit prejudice and yet not epistemically blameworthy? An example might be a case of (what we might call) environmental bad epistemic luck: where there is prejudice in the epistemic environment, and one has no reason to suspect that this is so, resulting in an epistemically innocent inheritance of environmental prejudice. Where this is so, we see a space for no-fault epistemic responsibility—the epistemic analogue of ‘agent regret’.

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