Instrumentalism, Moral Encroachment, and Epistemic Injustice

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Abstract: According to the thesis of pragmatic encroachment, practical circumstances can affect whether someone is in a position to know or rationally believe a proposition. For example, whether it is epistemically rational for a person to believe that the bank will be open on Saturdays, can depend not only on the strength of the person's evidence, but also on how practically important it is for the person not to be wrong about the bank being open on Saturdays. In recent years, philosophers have argued that *moral* considerations can also affect the epistemic rationality of belief, thus giving rise to moral encroachment. In previous work (Steglich-Petersen, forthcoming a), I have developed an explanation of pragmatic encroachment grounded in an instrumentalist theory of epistemic reasons. Here, I argue that this explanation extends to moral encroachment as well, including so-called "radical" moral encroachment. I also show how this explanation dispels the worry raised by Gerken (2019), that pragmatic encroachment might give rise to morally adverse consequences in the form of epistemic injustice.

1. Introduction

According to the thesis of *pragmatic encroachment*, practical circumstances can affect whether someone is in a position to know or rationally believe a proposition.[1] For example, whether it is epistemically rational for a person to believe that the bank will be open on Saturdays, can depend not only on the person's evidence, but also on how practically important it is for the person not to act on a false belief about the bank being open on Saturdays. In recent years, philosophers have argued that *moral* considerations can also affect the epistemic rationality of belief, thus giving rise to *moral encroachment*.[2] What has been

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[1] For defenses of pragmatic encroachment on knowledge and rational belief, see e.g. Fantl & McGrath (2002), Stanley (2005); Schroeder (2012); Weatherson (2012); Ross & Schroeder (2014); Roeber (2018). Skeptics about pragmatic encroachment include Neta (2007); Brown (2008); Nagel (2008); Fumerton (2010); Lackey (2010); Reed (2012); Cohen (2012); Gerken (2017). In the following, I focus on pragmatic encroachment on epistemically rational or justified belief, rather than knowledge. I use the terms epistemically "rational" and "justified" interchangeably.

[2] For defenses of moral encroachment, see e.g. Baril (forthcoming), Basu (2018; 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2021), Basu and Schroeder (2019); Bolinger (2020a; 2020b); Dandalet (2021); Fabre (2022); Fritz (2017; 2020); Gomez (2021); Jackson and Fritz (2021); Marušić & White (2018); Moss (2018); Pace (2011); Saint-Croix (2022); Schroeder (2019). For skeptics

called "moderate" cases of moral encroachment seem like natural variations of the cases motivating pragmatic encroachment, the principal difference being that the importance of not being wrong stems from a risk of morally rather than prudentially adverse consequences if one acts on a false belief. But some have also defended cases of what has been called "radical" moral encroachment, where a moral wrong associated with a *belief itself* can affect its epistemic rationality, regardless of any morally bad consequences that acting on the belief might lead to, thus making it unclear to what extent such cases can be understood as instances of pragmatic encroachment (Basu 2019b; Bollinger 2020a). In previous work, I have developed an explanation of pragmatic encroachment grounded in an instrumentalist theory of epistemic reasons (Steglich-Petersen, forthcoming a). Here, I argue that this explanation extends to moral encroachment as well, including the radical kind. It thus offers a unified explanation not only of pragmatic and moral encroachment, but also of the moderate and radical varieties of moral encroachment. I also show how this explanation dispels a worry recently voiced by Gerken (2019), that pragmatic encroachment might give rise to morally adverse consequences in the form of epistemic injustice.

The rest of the paper will proceed as follows. In §2, I introduce the phenomena of pragmatic and moral encroachment on rational belief. In §3, I sketch my transmission-based version of instrumentalism about epistemic reasons, and explain how it accounts for pragmatic encroachment. In §4, I show how it also accounts for both moderate and radical moral encroachment. In §5, I discuss the worry that pragmatic encroachment gives rise to epistemic injustice, and argue that the instrumentalist explanation dispels this worry. §6 is a brief summary and conclusion.

2. Pragmatic and moral encroachment

Pragmatic encroachment is usually motivated by sets of cases that are identical with respect to the evidence, but differ with respect to the practical importance of not believing something false. Here is one such set of cases:[3]

> **Low Stakes:** Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their paychecks. It is not important that they do so, as they have no impending bills. But as they drive past the bank, they notice that the lines inside are very long, as they often are on Friday

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about moral encroachment, see e.g. Begby (2018); Davia (forthcoming); Enoch and Spectre (forthcoming); Gardiner (2018); Howard (2021); Rapstine (2020); Rioux (forthcoming).
[3] Adapted from Schroeder (2012: 266-7), who adapted them from Stanley (2005) and DeRose (1992).

afternoons. Hannah remembers the bank being open on Saturday morning a few weeks ago, so she says, 'Fortunately, it will be open tomorrow, so we can just come back.'

Hannah's belief that the bank will be open could plausibly be considered epistemically rational. She remembers the bank being open a few weeks ago, which, given relevant background knowledge, could be sufficient epistemic reason for the belief. But consider then the following case:

> **High Stakes:** Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their paychecks. Since their mortgage payment is due on Sunday, they have very little in their account, and they are on the brink of foreclosure, it is very important that they deposit their paychecks by Saturday. But as they drive past the bank, they notice that the lines inside are very long, as they often are on Friday afternoons. Hannah remembers the bank being open on Saturday morning a few weeks ago, so she says, 'Fortunately, it will be open tomorrow, so we can just come back.'

Here, it seems much less plausible that Hannah's belief is epistemically rational. And since the cases are evidentially identical, and only differ with respect to how badly things will go for Hannah and Sarah if they act on a false belief that the bank will be open, it must be this practical factor that makes the difference to the epistemic rationality of Hannah's belief.

Consider next a variation of the cases where a *moral* factor seems to make a difference to the rationality of belief (compared to Low Stakes):

> **High Moral Stakes:** Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their paychecks. They have promised to pay for a poor relative's mortgage payment, which is due on Sunday, they have very little in their account, and their relative is on the brink of foreclosure and eviction. So, it is morally very important that they deposit their paychecks by Saturday. But as they drive past the bank, they notice that the lines inside are very long, as they often are on Friday afternoons. Hannah remembers the bank being open on Saturday morning a few weeks ago, so she says, 'Fortunately, it will be open tomorrow, so we can just come back.'

If the practical circumstances make a difference in High Stakes, it is difficult to see why the practical circumstances in cases like High Moral Stakes should not make a difference as well (Fritz 2017; 2020; Moss 2018). After all, the only substantial difference between the two cases is that, whereas in High Stakes, the adverse consequences of acting on a false belief befall Hannah and Sarah themselves, they befall their poor relative in High Moral Stakes, thus causing Hannah and Sarah to fail to live up to their moral responsibility. The structural similarity to the original cases also means that, whatever explains pragmatic encroachment, we should expect moral encroachment of this kind to be explained in substantially the same way.[4]

We can contrast this "moderate" kind of moral encroachment, with a more "radical" kind, the reality of which is also much more controversial among defenders of moral encroachment.[5] In cases of moderate moral encroachment, the epistemic rationality of belief seems sensitive to moral features of the *actions* that the beliefs might cause the believer to perform. By contrast, in cases of radical moral encroachment, the epistemic rationality of belief seems sensitive to moral features of the *beliefs themselves*. Consider the following case, adapted from Gendler (2011) by Basu (2019b), which is often taken to motivate radical moral encroachment:

> **Social Club**: Agnes and Esther are members of a swanky D.C. social club with a strict dress code of tuxedos for both male guests and staff members, and dresses for female guests and staff members. While preparing for their evening walk, the two women head toward the coat check to collect their coats. As they approach the coat check, they both look around for a staff member. As Agnes looks around, she notices a well-dressed black man standing off to the side and tells Esther, "There's a staff member. We can give our coat check ticket to him."

As Basu (2019b) points out, believing that the well-dressed black man is a staff member based on the color of his skin is a paradigmatic case of racism. Importantly, on the face of things, the *belief itself* seems racist, and thus morally wrong, independently of any racist *actions* or *statements* that the belief might cause Agnes to perform or make. Agnes's belief wrongs the black man, even if she doesn't act on it, for example by handing him her coat check ticket. Note, however, that we may supply background information that makes the belief very likely to be true in light of his skin color. Suppose, for example, that Agnes knows that it is a busy

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[4] For further cases involving moral stakes of this kind, see Ross & Schroeder (2014) and Fritz (2020).
[5] For this distinction, see Fritz (2019). Prominent defenders of radical moral encroachment include Basu & Schroeder (2019) and Basu (2019a).

night with many guests, only a couple of whom are black, and that all of the many staff members are black. This makes it quite likely that the well-dressed black man is a member of the staff. In fact, the evidential likelihood of this could be well above the level normally required for rational belief. One might conclude from this that epistemic rationality in some unfortunate cases condones or even requires that we form racist beliefs, and that our epistemic obligations thus come apart from our moral ones. But another possibility is that the moral wrongness of the belief affects its epistemic rationality, thus causing the belief to be epistemically irrational despite its high likelihood of being true. If so, it would be a case of radical moral encroachment.

A central question in the debate over the reality of radical moral encroachment concerns whether only false beliefs can wrong others in a way that could affect their epistemic rationality. If true beliefs can wrong others morally, and this kind of wrongness can speak against believing, it seems to be a reason of the *wrong kind* to speak against the epistemic rationality of belief - after all, epistemic rationality is (in some broad sense) rationality in the pursuit of knowledge and true belief. On the other hand, if only false beliefs can wrong others morally, and this wrongness can speak against believing, it could conceivably be a reason of the *right kind* to speak against the epistemic rationality of belief.[6] Hence, for defenders of radical moral encroachment, it has been important to show that only false beliefs can wrong others morally.[7]

A compelling line of reasoning seems to show, however, that the moral wrong at play in cases such as Social Club does *not* depend on the relevant beliefs being false.[8] Consider the following simple elaboration of Social Club: Suppose that the black man *is* in fact a member of the staff, and not a guest, thus rendering Agnes's belief true. Does that make Agnes's belief any less racist? This is not obvious. It seems that the black man could rightfully object to Agnes concluding that he is a member of the staff based simply on the color of his skin, even if he *is* in fact a member of the staff. If that is right, it would seem that a belief can wrong morally even when it is true. Falsity would thus not be necessary for wronging.

Another variation of Social Club seems to show that the falsity of a belief is not sufficient for wronging either, even when the belief has a content with the potential to wrong someone. Suppose that the black man is *not* a member of the staff, but that he for some reason tells Esther and Agnes that he is. Perhaps he is used to being mistaken for a staff member, and wants to preempt an awkward situation by saying that he is. Suppose further that Esther and Agnes would not have thought that he is a member of staff if he had not told

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[6] For this distinction, see e.g. Hieronymi (2005) and Schroeder (2012).
[7] See e.g. Schroeder (2018), who explicitly makes this assumption. Fabre (2022) denies it. For discussion, see Fritz (2020).
[8] For this line of reasoning, see Traldi (2022) and Dandalet (forthcoming).

them so. If they were to take his word for it, and come to believe that he is a member of the staff on that basis, would their belief be racist? Again, this is not obvious. In fact, not taking his word for it seems to wrong him in another way by denying him the basic trust that he deserves. If that is right, it would seem that falsity is not sufficient for the belief to wrong the black man, even if the belief has a content with the potential to wrong him.

Although these examples have some plausibility, I believe that they are ultimately misleading. Note that in the above example of a true belief that appears to wrong someone morally, Agnes does not display the level of care in her reasoning that the situation calls for, but instead jumps to conclusions based on the black man's skin color. And in the case of a false belief that nevertheless does not appear to wrong anyone, the opposite is the case: Agnes does display the level of care in her reasoning that the situation calls for, by appropriately trusting the black man's statement. This might suggest that the moral quality of the cases tracks features of Agnes' reasoning, rather than the truth value of her beliefs (Cf. Tadri 2022; Dandanel forthcoming).

But what, exactly, is it that Agnes should be extra careful about in these cases? The obvious answer is that Agnes should be extra careful in her reasoning to *avoid a false belief*. But in that case, the moral wrong must be tied, at least in part, to the falsity of the relevant belief. After all, why should Agnes be morally obligated to be extra careful to avoid a false belief, if there was nothing morally wrong about such a false belief in the first place? And if that is the case, the moral considerations at play seem like reasons of the right kind to affect the epistemic rationality of belief: the moral considerations make a difference by calling for increased epistemic vigilance in the care we take to avoid a false belief, rather than by speaking directly for or against beliefs irrespective of their truth value.[9]

This is compatible with Agnes being deserving of blame, even though she ends up believing the truth, and being blameless, even though she ends up believing a falsehood. In the case of a true belief that appears to wrong the black man, we might thus explain this appearance in terms of Agnes being deserving of blame for not displaying sufficient care in her reasoning to avoid a false belief. And in the case of a false belief that does not appear to wrong anyone, we might explain this appearance in terms of Agnes not being deserving of blame, because she is sufficiently careful in her reasoning to avoid a false belief. I will return to the question of how to best understand this matter in §4 below.

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[9] This commits me to what Dandalet calls the "Belief First View", according to which "beliefs are the locus of our ethical interest in doxastic activity" (forthcoming: 1).

3. The instrumentalist explanation of pragmatic encroachment

With this description of moral encroachment in place, we can turn to the task of explaining it. Some might wonder why such an explanation is needed. After all, we have already noted that insofar as pragmatic and moral encroachment exists, it obtains by virtue of certain encroaching factors, namely the adverse practical or moral consequences or features associated with some false beliefs. However, it is one thing to identify the encroaching factors, and another thing to explain *how* they influence the epistemic rationality of belief. To compare, it is one thing to identify a cause of some effect, and another thing to identify the mechanism by which the cause gives rise to the effect. It is this sort of "how" that I will focus on in the following. As mentioned above, I will argue that the instrumentalist explanation of pragmatic encroachment that I have proposed in previous work extends to explain moral encroachment as well. In this section, I review the instrumentalist explanation of pragmatic encroachment proposed in (Steglich-Petersen, forthcoming a).

Epistemic instrumentalists hold that epistemic norms, reasons and rationality should be identified with instrumental norms, reasons and rationality. This basic idea has been developed in a number of different ways.[10] In previous work, I have defended a version, according to which epistemic reasons should be identified with a particular subclass of instrumental reasons.[11] Instrumental reasons to φ are reasons that obtain in virtue of φ-ing being instrumental to something else that we have reason to pursue. For example, I might have reason to take a pill, because doing so is instrumental to something else that I have reason to pursue: relieving a headache. Some philosophers hold that simply *having* some aim in itself gives rise to instrumental reasons to take appropriate means to it, but I will not make that assumption. If there is no reason to pursue the aim, why suppose that we have reason to take means to it?[12] But most would agree that when one does have reason to pursue an aim, that gives us reason to take appropriate means. This phenomenon is known as "instrumental transmission", and has been attempted captured by various transmission principles. Such principles should both capture that reasons transmit from aims to appropriate means, and that the strength of one's reasons to take means depends partly on the strength of one's

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[10] Different versions of epistemic instrumentalism have been defended by e.g. Quine (1967); Foley (1987); Laudan (1990); Kornblith (1993); Nozick (1993); Papineau (1999); and Cowie (2014). For criticisms, see e.g. Kelly (2003) and Côté-Bouchard (2015).

[11] The version of instrumentalism to be defended follows Steglich-Petersen (2006; 2009; 2011, 2013; 2018; forthcoming a and b) and Steglich-Petersen & Skipper (2020a; 2020b).

[12] This is known as the "bootstrapping problem" for accounts of instrumental rationality (Bratman 1981). The transmissions principle is not vulnerable to this problem, since it conditions reasons to take means on the existence of reasons to pursue aims, rather than letting the aims of agents create reasons to take means. See (Steglich-Petersen 2018) for a detailed discussion.

reasons to pursue the aim, and partly on how likely the means are to bring about the aim. Here is one way of capturing that, inspired by Niko Kolodny's 'General Transmission' principle (2018):

> **General Instrumental Transmission:** If there is reason for one to pursue aim A, and there is positive probability conditional on one's φ-ing, that this helps bring about A, then that is a reason for one to φ, the strength of which depends on the reason for one to pursue A and the probability.[13]

How can this principle be applied to understand epistemic reasons? Suppose, as I will, that the characteristically epistemic aims are the twin aims of *believing what is true* and *avoiding believing what is false* with respect to particular propositions. The general idea, then, is that when we have reasons to pursue these aims with respect to some proposition, those reasons will transmit as epistemic reasons for the doxastic attitudes towards that proposition, to the extent that there is positive probability on one's evidence that those attitudes will help bring about the aims. This can be captured by the following instantiation of the general transmission principle:

> **Instrumental Transmission of Epistemic Reasons for Doxastic Attitudes:** If there is reason for one to pursue the aims of coming to a true belief and avoiding a false belief as to whether *p*, and there is positive probability conditional on one's adopting doxastic attitude A with respect to *p*, that this helps bring about those aims, then that is an epistemic reason for one to adopt A with respect to *p*, whose strength depends on the reason for one to pursue the aims and the probability.

Assume that there are three doxastic attitudes that one can take towards a proposition: belief that *p*, disbelief that *p*, and withholding belief with respect to *p*. How can these attitudes help bring about the epistemic aims, so as to allow reasons for the epistemic aims to be transmitted to the attitudes? By *constituting* the achievement of the aims. When *p* is true, believing *p* constitutes the achievement of the aims of believing what is true and avoiding believing what is false with respect to *p*. Likewise for disbelieving *p* when *p* is false. And withholding with

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[13] Some clarificatory comments: First, the principle makes no assumptions about the kinds of reasons for pursuing aims that can transmit to means. Second, as Kolodny (2018) emphasizes, 'help bring about' should not be understood as restricted to causing the aim becoming realized, but can also encompass constituting, satisfying preconditions of, preventing preventers, and the like. Third, the principle construes the effectiveness of means in terms of how means affect the probability of the aim being realized. The relevant kind of probability at play here is epistemic probability.

respect to *p* constitutes the achievement of the aim of avoiding believing what is false with respect to *p*, regardless of whether *p* is true or false.

This explains why evidence in favor of *p* speaks in favor of believing *p*, and why the weight of epistemic reasons is partly a function of the strength of the evidence: evidence for *p* affects the probability of believing *p* achieving the aim of believing what is true and avoiding believing what is false with respect to *p*. Evidence thus plays the same role in speaking in favor of doxastic attitudes, as it does in speaking in favor of any other instrumental act. Note that the reasons in favor of pursuing the epistemic aims can be transmitted to other states or acts, and not just doxastic attitudes. Most importantly, they can be transmitted to acts of inquiry. For example, if I have reason to pursue a true belief as to whether the bank is open on Saturdays, this reason will transmit to various acts of inquiry, such as looking up the bank's opening hours, etc. On this understanding, epistemic reasons and reasons for acts of inquiry are thus both instrumental reasons transmitted from the same epistemic aims.[14]

I will assume that the epistemically rational attitude to take towards a proposition is the one that is *most* supported by epistemic reasons transmitted from both epistemic aims. To determine which doxastic attitude is the epistemically rational attitude to take towards a proposition, we must thus determine the weight of the reasons supporting the pursuit of each epistemic aim, and determine how likely the doxastic options are to constitute the realization of those aims. The transmission principle gives rise to the the following order of strength of the reasons transmitted from the two epistemic aims:

> Reasons transmitted from the aim of believing what is true with respect to *p* always support the following doxastic attitudes in the following order of strength:
>   1. The belief most likely to be true
>   2. The belief least likely to be true

> Reasons transmitted from the aim of avoiding believing what is false with respect to *p* always support the following doxastic attitudes in the following order of strength:
>   1. Withholding (since withholding is guaranteed to avoid believing what is false)
>   2. The belief most likely to be true (since this makes it least likely to be false)
>   3. The belief least likely to be true (since this makes it most likely to be false)

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[14] As argued in (Steglich-Petersen, forthcoming b), this enables us to avoid the awkward tension between epistemic reasons and reasons for acts of inquiry, described by Friedman (2020).

Given this, it is not possible to have more epistemic reason to believe p than to believe not-p (or vice versa) when the evidential probability of p is ≤ 0.5. The evidence alone thus allows us to determine whether believing p is more rational than disbelieving p, and vice versa. However, the evidence alone does *not* let us determine whether it is more rational to believe p than to withhold belief with respect to p. To determine this, we must consider the relative strengths of the reasons for pursuing the epistemic aims.

Two further observations are needed for this account to explain pragmatic encroachment. First, we can note that the reasons we have for pursuing the epistemic aims often seem best described as broadly *practical* in character. For example, the reason I have at the moment to pursue a true belief and avoid a false one with respect to *what time it is*, might be grounded in my practical need to make the train; and the reason I have to pursue a true belief with respect to *whether it will rain today*, might be grounded in my practical need to wear appropriate clothes. Sometimes, the reasons we have to pursue true beliefs seem more intellectual in character – believing the truth as to whether abstract objects exist is not likely to be of much practical use to me, but might be of some intellectual value. Some philosophers think that having *any* true belief is always of some intrinsic value, while having any false belief is always of some intrinsic disvalue (e.g. Lynch 2004; Parfit 2011). While I disagree with this view, it is compatible with the transmission-based version of instrumentalism. What is important for our purposes is that these intrinsic values, insofar as they exist, are not alone in speaking for or against pursuing the epistemic aims - practical considerations can clearly do so as well. This also means that we can have more or less reason to pursue the epistemic aims with respect to different propositions, depending on the practical considerations at play – some propositions are more useful, interesting, informationally rich, etc., than others, to have true beliefs about (Cf. Papineau 2013).

The second observation needed for explaining pragmatic encroachment, is that reasons for pursuing a true belief about a proposition, and reasons to avoid a false belief about that proposition, are not always of equal weight, which in turn means that the reasons transmitted from these aims will also differ in weight. This is exactly what we find in the cases that motivate pragmatic encroachment. Consider Low Stakes. Hannah's evidence makes it quite likely that the bank will be open on Saturday. She has reason to pursue a true belief as to whether the bank will be open, but not a particularly strong one. Believing truly that the bank will be open will allow her to postpone her visit and thus avoid the lines. Disbelieving truly that the bank will be open will allow her to avoid a wasted trip on Saturday. She also has reason to avoid a false belief, but again, not a very strong one. Believing falsely that the

bank will be open will cost her a wasted trip. Disbelieving falsely that the bank will be open will cost her to wait unnecessarily in line. Either way, nothing much is at stake.

So which doxastic option is most supported in Low Stakes? Since there is no drastic difference in weight between the reasons for pursuing a true belief and for avoiding a false one, and believing that the bank will be open stands at a good chance of achieving both aims, while withholding only stands to achieve the one, it seems plausible that there is most epistemic reason to believe that the bank will be open. In other words, believing that the bank will be open is most supported by the reasons transmitted from the two epistemic aims.

Compare this to the situation in High Stakes. This case was set up to be evidentially identical to Low Stakes, and it is thus equally probable for Hannah in the two cases that the bank will be open. The difference between the two cases consists in how badly things will go for Hannah if she believes falsely that the bank will be open. This will have the effect of increasing the weight of the reasons in favor of avoiding a false belief, without at the same time increasing the weight of the reasons in favor of seeking a true belief. And since the reasons in favor of avoiding a false belief are transmitted in an unmitigated way to withholding (since withholding is guaranteed to achieve the aim), but only transmitted in a mitigated way to the belief that the bank will be open (since this belief is not guaranteed to achieve the aim), this difference can tip the balance of reasons, and cause withholding to be the epistemically rational doxastic option. The instrumental transmission principle can thus explain how a difference in how bad it would be for Hannah to end up with a false belief can make a difference to whether or not Hannah is epistemically rational in believing that the bank will be open.

4. Explaining moral encroachment

With this explanation of pragmatic encroachment in place, we can move on to consider how the explanation extends to *moral* encroachment. On the instrumentalist account, the principal difference between moral and non-moral cases of pragmatic encroachment should be located in the kind of reasons we have in the respective cases to pursue the epistemic aims. In Low Stakes and High Stakes, the reasons at play are best characterized as prudential in nature. The difference between the two cases is a matter of how Hannah and Sarah's self-interest stands to be affected if they form a false belief about the bank's opening hours. But, as noted above, the instrumentalist framework allows a wide variety of considerations to act as reasons to pursue the epistemic aims. In particular, there is no obstacle to letting *moral* considerations act as such reasons.

I will understand moral reasons as those that, in some broad sense, constrain how we may or ought to act in light of the rights and interests of others. Understood as such, it seems eminently clear that we can have moral reasons for pursuing the epistemic aims with respect to particular propositions. Some of these reasons are tied to the consequences of *acting* on true and false beliefs. To take a trivial example, I can only act as I ought in light of the rights and interests of others, if I have true beliefs about what those rights and interests are. Conversely, I risk *not* acting as I ought if I have false beliefs about their rights and interests. So I have good moral reason to pursue true beliefs and to avoid false beliefs about the rights and interests of others. Another important set of moral reasons tied to the consequences of acting on true and false beliefs, concern the factual circumstances that we must be aware of in order to be able to act in the interest of others, and avoid acting against them. If I have promised to pick up my friend when her train arrives, I stand a better chance of upholding my promise if I have a true belief about the time of her train's arrival, and I risk breaking my promise if I have a false belief on the matter, thus giving me moral reason to pursue a true belief and avoid a false one about the time of her train's arrival.

This is the sort of reasons at play in High Moral Stakes, and other cases of "moderate" moral encroachment, where the epistemic rationality of belief is sensitive to moral features of the actions that the beliefs stand to cause. This allows a straightforward extension of the instrumentalist explanation outlined above. In the non-moral version of High Stakes, Hannah and Sarah have comparatively more reason to avoid a false belief about the bank's opening hours, than to pursue a true belief, where these reasons are prudential in nature. In High Moral Stakes, Hannah and Sarah have comparatively more reason to avoid a false belief about the bank's opening hours, than to pursue a true belief, where these reasons are moral in nature, grounded as they are in Hannah and Sarah's obligation to their relative. So, insofar as we can have moral reasons to pursue the epistemic aims, moderate moral encroachment can be explained in the instrumentalist framework in substantially the same way as standard cases of pragmatic encroachment.

Given that moderate cases of moral encroachment seem like natural variations of pragmatic encroachment, it is perhaps unsurprising that an explanation of pragmatic encroachment extends to such cases as well. But what about the "radical" cases of moral encroachment, which do not depend on features of the actions that the relevant beliefs stand to cause, and thus tend not to be classified as variations of pragmatic encroachment (Basu 2019b)? A benefit of the version of instrumentalism outlined above is that it is flexible when

it comes to the reasons we could have for pursuing the epistemic aims.[15] We often seek true beliefs because of the action guidance that they enable, and our reasons for pursuing the epistemic aims are often grounded in this purpose. But as mentioned above, we also often seek true beliefs without regard for the actions they might guide. We might simply value having true beliefs about some matters. Often, we want true beliefs because they embody our interest and regard for other people. I want to hear and believe the truth about my wife's day at work not because I plan to act on these beliefs in some way, but because they form part of what embodies my interest and regard for her. Our relationships thus often seem to morally require seeking true beliefs, and to avoid false ones. Indeed, some moral relationships are partly structured by an interest in seeking true beliefs and avoiding false ones about other people, and sometimes they even require us to do so. Part of being a good parent, spouse, friend, relative, or colleague, is to take interest in our relations by seeking true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs about them with respect to certain matters. This also means that being uninterested or careless in one's beliefs about them can be hurtful, and constitute violations of one's relationships.

Although the moral significance of pursuing true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs about others is most obvious when it comes to our personal relationships, it does not seem limited to these. If our beliefs can form part of our regard for others, there is no reason why this phenomenon could not extend to people with whom we do not stand in a particular personal relationship. Our capacity to respect or hurt strangers with our beliefs may be more limited, but we clearly do care what strangers believe about us, and how they form beliefs about us. For example, it matters to most of us that people don't hold disparaging beliefs about us based on stereotypes. The above version of instrumentalism can capture the import of these considerations by letting them act as moral reasons to pursue the epistemic aims with respect to other people.

With this in mind, consider the reasons at play in Social Club. Agnes and Esther have some reason, but not a very strong one, to pursue a true belief as to whether the well-dressed black man is a member of the staff, since believing truly that he is a member of the staff will help them get their coats. On the other hand, they have a strong reason to avoid a false belief

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[15] Some might think that it is *too* flexible in this respect. If it allows all kinds of practical reasons to pursue epistemic aims, and these reasons can affect the epistemic merits of attitudes, one could imagine, say, *aesthetic* or *etiquette* encroachment on epistemically rational belief, in addition to pragmatic and moral encroachment. Although I will not discuss this possibility in detail here, I don't find it especially implausible. As mentioned above, we do seem to care about the epistemic aims for a wide variety of reasons, depending on the proposition at stake. If it makes sense to pursue the epistemic aims with respect to some proposition for aesthetic reasons, it is hard to see why such reasons should not affect the epistemic merits of attitudes in the same way that practical or moral reasons might. I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue, and hope to discuss it in more detail elsewhere.

as to whether he is a member of the staff, since believing falsely that he is a member of the staff would wrong him, given the particular social and political environment they find themselves in. Given the evidence, both reasons will transmit to the doxastic options of believing, disbelieving, and withholding judgment with respect to whether he is a member of the staff. But despite the relatively high evidential probability of him being a staff member, the difference in weight between the reasons for pursuing a true belief and avoiding a false belief, could plausibly result in there being most reason to withhold judgment.[16] So, the instrumentalist account seems to explain radical cases of moral encroachment.

What about the complication discussed in §2? Recall, we can imagine variations of Social Club, where Agnes appears to wrong the black man even though her belief turns out to be true, and doesn't appear to wrong him even though her belief turns out to be false. I argued that these differences are best understood, respectively, as a matter of Agnes deserving blame for not displaying sufficient care in her reasoning to avoid a false belief, and of Agnes being blameless because of her displaying sufficient care to avoid it. In the instrumentalist framework, these differences can be explained as a question of whether Agnes responds appropriately to her transmitted reasons. To make this clear, consider the following non-epistemic case:

> **Station Drive:** Agnes has promised to get Esther to the station in time for the last train. She can either drive through town or take the ring road. Normally, the ring road is faster at this time of the evening, and, given their evidence, they are thus more likely to make the train by taking the ring road. This evening, however, the town center is uncharacteristically quiet, and because of an accident, the ring road is blocked.

In this case, because of her promise, Agnes has a moral reason to get Esther to the station in time for the last train. This reason transmits to the possible means to upholding her promise,

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[16] As von Klemperer (forthcoming) points out, if a belief can wrong in cases such as this, it seems that the attitude of withholding judgment can wrong as well. For example, Agnes can wrong the black man by suspending judgment on whether he is a member of the staff. As von Klemperer argues, this commits proponents of radical moral encroachment to the possibility of moral factors sometimes making it *easier* rather than *harder* for beliefs to be epistemically rational. As she puts it, it commits them to *symmetric* mechanisms for moral considerations to affect the epistemic merits of attitudes (for a related point, see Cassell (forthcoming)). This is potentially worrying insofar as it could force proponents of moral encroachment to condone the rationality of believing against the evidence in some cases. The instrumentalist explanation does posit symmetric mechanisms for affecting the epistemic merits of attitudes, since a stronger reason for pursuing the aim of coming to a true belief as to whether p will make the transmitted reasons for adopting such a belief more likely to outweigh the reasons in favor of suspending judgment. However, as pointed out in §3, the instrumentalist account rules out that one could have more reason to believe p than to believe not-p (or vice versa) when the evidential probability of p is ≤ 0.5. It therefore does not permit believing against the evidence.

which includes the two different routes she could drive her. The strength of her transmitted reasons depends partly on the epistemic probability that the respective means will help Agnes keep her promise. And since the probability of this is higher if Agnes takes the ring road, compared to driving through town, she has more transmitted reason to take the ring road (other things being equal).

Consider now two elaborations of the example. Suppose first that, out of careless habit, Agnes drives through town. Because the town is uncharacteristically quiet this evening, they nevertheless narrowly make the train. Agnes thus manages to keep her promise to Esther. It seems, however, that Agnes deserves blame for not responding appropriately to her transmitted reasons. She had more reason to take the ring road, and exposed Esther to unnecessary risk by driving through town. Esther in particular can blame Agnes. After all, it is Esther that was exposed to the unnecessary risk, and she can therefore rightfully hold that Agnes did not afford her the consideration she deserved.

Suppose instead that Agnes responds appropriately to her reasons, and takes the ring road. Because of the traffic, they get held up, and Esther misses her train. Agnes thus doesn't manage to keep her promise to Esther. Nevertheless, it seems that Agnes does not deserve blame, since she did what she had most transmitted reason to do. And even though Agnes did not keep her promise, Esther is not in a position to blame Agnes. In responding to her reasons as she did, Agnes afforded Esther the consideration that she deserved.

These variations of Station Drive seem relevantly analogous to the variations of Social Club. In the first variation, Agnes manages to avoid a wronging belief, but nevertheless deserves blame for not responding appropriately to her transmitted reasons. In particular, the black man is in a position to blame Agnes, since it is towards him that Agnes fails to show adequate consideration in responding as she does to her reasons. In the second variation, Agnes ends up with a belief that wrongs the black man, but she does not deserve blame for it, since she responds appropriately to the transmitted reasons. What is more, Agnes affords the black man appropriate consideration in responding as she does. It thus seems that the instrumentalist explanation is able to capture our intuitions in these variations of Social Club.

5. Pragmatic encroachment and epistemic injustice

A key attraction of accepting moral encroachment is that it will often let us classify morally problematic beliefs as epistemically irrational. In Social Club, epistemic rationality does not allow Agnes to form a racist belief, because the moral encroachment at play prevents this belief from being epistemically rational despite its relatively high likelihood of being true.

Moral encroachment thus allows us to avoid widespread divergence between morality and epistemic rationality. Recently, however, Gerken (2019) has argued that pragmatic encroachment can have morally *adverse* consequences, by giving rise to a morally problematic form of epistemic injustice. In this final section, I argue that the instrumentalist explanation of pragmatic encroachment avoids this troubling consequence.

Gerken's argument starts from the following set of cases:

Rich: Richie is extremely wealthy, but to practice his Spanish, he has applied for a job at a US company with a market in South America. It is not particularly important to Richie that he gets the job since he just wants to practice his Spanish and can easily find another job opportunity. At the interview, Richie is asked what the capital of Peru is. Richie has a reliable memory and correctly remembers it is Lima, although he does not remember the source of his belief.

Broke: Brooke is extremely poor and has applied for a job at a US company with a market in South America in order to get some much-needed income. It is extremely important to Brooke that she get the job since she is in serious debt and cannot easily find another job opportunity. At the interview, Brooke is asked what the capital of Peru is. Brooke has a reliable memory and correctly remembers that it is Lima, although she does not remember the source of her belief.

Assume that Richie and Brooke have equally reliable memory of the capital of Peru, and that they are also alike in any other truth-relevant respect. Nevertheless, pragmatic encroachment would make it possible that Richie's memory-based belief is rational, while Brooke's belief is irrational. As Gerken points out, the stakes of getting the answer right are much higher for Brooke than for Richie, and may thus cause Brooke's belief to be irrational by raising the evidential threshold for rational belief.[17]

However, denying that Brooke rationally believes that Lima is the capital of Peru because of her adverse social circumstances seems like a paradigmatic case of epistemic injustice, since it would be treating her as being in a weaker epistemic position than she in fact is because of an unjust feature of the situation (Cf. Fricker 2007). So, pragmatic encroachment seems to create what appears to be a clear-cut case of epistemic injustice. In

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[17] It should be noted that Gerken does not discuss the potential for practical factors to influence the rationality of belief, but rather its potential influence on whether we would attribute knowledge to in the two cases. Presumably, however, his argument would apply to rational belief as well, since it is the rationality condition and not the truth condition of knowledge that is in question.

other words, rather than securing an alignment between morality and epistemic rationality, pragmatic encroachment seems to cause morally unjust epistemic assessments.

As I will now argue, however, while some explanations of pragmatic encroachment may well lead to this result, the instrumentalist explanation does not. This is because, according to the instrumentalist explanation, we should not only factor in the costs of a false belief for the agent, but also the benefits of a true belief, and it is the *relative* weights of these considerations, and not their respective *absolute* weights, that matter for what you should believe. This blocks a differential assessment of the epistemic rationality of beliefs like those of Richie and Brooke.

Consider the reasons bearing on Richie's doxastic options. Richie would like to get the job, but it is not very important. Since getting the job depends at least in part on getting the name of the capital of Peru right, it would be somewhat bad for Richie if his belief about the capital is false, and somewhat good if it is true. This means that a reason of a limited weight for pursuing the aim of not believing something false with respect to the capital of Lima, and a reason of a similarly limited weight for pursuing the aim of believing the truth about this, transmit to his doxastic options. Given that there is no drastic difference between the weights of these reasons, and given that Richie's reliable memory makes it quite likely that Lima is the capital of Peru, we can reasonably conclude that belief in this is the doxastic option most supported by Richie's epistemic reasons. The belief is therefore epistemically rational for Richie.

Is the situation any different for Brooke? Her stakes are much higher, since it is very important for her to get the job, and thus very important that she gets the capital of Peru right. So, it would be very bad for her if she had a false belief about the name of the capital. But it would also be very good for her if she had a true belief about the name of the capital. In fact, merely avoiding a false belief by withholding belief would not get her the job. So, a heavy weighing reason for pursuing the aim of not believing something false with respect to the capital of Peru, and a similarly heavy weighing reason for pursuing the aim of believing the truth, transmit to her doxastic options. And just like in the case of Riche, since there is no drastic difference between the weights of these reasons, and given that Brooke's reliable memory makes it quite likely that Lima is the capital of Peru, belief in this will be the doxastic option most supported by her epistemic reasons. Consequently, this belief is epistemically rational for Brooke.

So, although there is a great deal more at stake for Brooke than for Richie in getting the capital of Peru right, her belief is just as rational as Richie's, because what matters is the relative and not the absolute weight of the reasons transmitted from the two epistemic aims.

And since the relevant comparison of weights is *intrapersonal* rather than *interpersonal*, it is hard to see how pragmatic encroachment could give rise to a kind of epistemic injustice that tracks interpersonal injustice in the way suggested by Gerken.

Conclusion

I have argued that the instrumentalist explanation of pragmatic encroachment extends to moral encroachment as well. A key attraction of this explanation is that it delivers a unified explanation not only of pragmatic and moral encroachment, but also of the moderate and radical variants of moral encroachment, which are often treated as separate phenomena in the literature. Because of its ability to let a wide variety of considerations act as reasons to pursue the epistemic aims, the transmission principle can encompass both encroaching factors tied to the actions caused by the relevant beliefs, and encroaching factors tied to the beliefs themselves. Lastly, I argued the instrumentalist explanation dispels the worry that pragmatic encroachment might give rise to epistemic injustice.[18]

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