Varieties of Moral Encroachment

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Several authors have recently suggested that moral factors and norms 'encroach' on the epistemic, and because of salient parallels to pragmatic encroachment views in epistemology, these suggestions have been dubbed 'moral encroachment views'. This paper distinguishes between variants of the moral encroachment thesis, pointing out how they address different problems, are motivated by different considerations, and are not all subject to the same objections. It also explores how the family of moral encroachment views compare to classical pragmatic encroachment accounts.

keywords: moral encroachment, pragmatic encroachment, generalization, justified belief

1   Preliminaries

Some beliefs are morally bad. Sometimes all this means is that the world would be better if the beliefs weren't true. Sometimes, though, it means we seem to do something wrong in *having* the beliefs. Beliefs that demean or diminish someone in line with racist or sexist stereotypes, for instance, seem to be contents we shouldn't believe about people. In other cases, it might be that while there's nothing bad about the belief's content, a great moral harm would result from believing falsely,–e.g. thinking a ship is seaworthy, or an apartment complex structurally sound, when it isn't—and so we would do something morally wrong were we to believe on less than overwhelming evidence.

Traditionally, it is thought that reasons for or against forming a particular belief can be sorted into two categories: those affecting whether it is *epistemically* rational to believe, and those affecting the *practical* rationality, or all-things-considered permissibility of believing. On the classical understanding of this division between epistemic and practical reasons, only considerations bearing on whether p is true count as epistemic reasons, while all others (including moral considerations like the ones mentioned above) affect the practical but not epistemic rationality of belief. Pragmatic encroachment theorists challenge this division, maintaining that factors like the practical stakes of error make a difference to epistemic rationality by affecting how much evidence one must have for a belief to be justified or constitute knowledge. Recently, some have proposed that moral reasons can encroach on the epistemic in a similar way; that high *moral* stakes affect what it takes for a belief to be epistemically justified, or to count as knowledge.[1]

It is good to collect variants of this suggestion under a snappy name, and 'moral encroachment' has a nice ring to it. But there's a risk that in gathering various proposals under this heading, we will run together what are ultimately very different views about how moral reasons affects epistemic permissions. This matters because the various ways of filling out the details do not all satisfy the same set of motivating considerations, and are subject to different objections. There are even more varieties of moral encroachment than of pragmatic encroachment, and there were already plenty of those![2] The project of this paper is thus a humble one: to distinguish between variants of the moral encroachment thesis, highlighting the relevant choice points. As a starting point, we can characterize moral encroachment thus:

> MORAL ENCROACHMENT: Holding fixed the degree of probabilistic support the evidence gives for p, whether an epistemic attitude about p has some positive epistemic status can depend importantly on its moral features.[3]

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[1]As will emerge over the course of this article, there are many different ways to develop this idea, and the 'stakes' terminology is more fitting for some varieties of this view than others. I will continue to use it loosely, though, to refer to contexts identified by a view as ones in which the more demanding epistemic standards are relevant.

For an indicative but probably not exhaustive list, variants of this thesis have recently been defended by Basu (2019a, 2019b, in press), Basu and Schroeder (2019), Bolinger (2018), Buchak (2014), Fritz (2017), Guerrero (in press), Johnson-King and Babic (in press), Moss (2018a, 2018b), Pace (2011), and Schroeder (2018), and criticized by Begby (2018), Enoch (2016), Fritz (2019), Gardiner (2018, 2020), Jackson (2018), Worsnip (in press).

[2]For an informative overview of the varieties of pragmatic encroachment, see Kim (2017).

[3]Gardiner (2018) characterizes moral encroachment slightly more narrowly, as the thesis that "moral features of a belief can affect whether the belief is epistemically justified", which is basically equivalent to the gloss in Basu (2019a) ("the epistemic justification of our beliefs can be determined, in

This is clearly schematic and needs unpacking at several points, chiefly:

1. what epistemic attitudes are affected?

2. what positive epistemic status is affected?

3. what are the relevant moral features?

4. by what mechanism, and how directly, do these features affect the attitude's status?

After working through these, I'll consider a second cluster of questions which are equally important to understanding the commitments of the view: what specific view of the epistemic does the moral encroacher *deny*: what is the relationship between moral encroachment and evidentialism? And what is the relationship between moral encroachment, on the one hand, and doxastic wronging, on the other?

1.1 an illustrative case

To give you a more concrete example of the sort of phenomena at issue, here is a case originally presented by Gendler (2011) to illustrate the conflict between epistemic and moral norms, but later taken up (by Basu, 2019a; Basu & Schroeder, 2019; Bolinger, 2018, among others) to motivate moral encroachment:

> COSMOS CLUB: The night before he is to be presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, John Hope Franklin hosts a celebratory dinner party at the Cosmos Club, at which he is a member. All the other black men in the club are uniformed attendants. While walking through the club, a woman sees him, calls him over, presents her coat check ticket and orders him to bring her coat.

The woman shouldn't have believed on the basis of his race that Franklin was an attendant. But at least on a standard conception of evidence, this isn't because it doesn't evidentially support her belief: given that a person is a black man in that particular club, it is *exceptionally* probable that they are an attendant. Gendler (and others) take this to illustrate the conflict between epistemic and moral norms, concluding that while the woman was epistemically permitted to form her belief, she violated a moral prohibition in doing so. Advocates of moral encroachment contend instead that the moral reasons against forming *that* belief *in that way* make this a 'high-stakes' context, with the result that the woman's evidence is insufficient to make her belief epistemically permissible—but they differ about which features of the context are responsible for this effect. Basu (2019a) argues that because of the exclusionary and subordinating history of the club, the woman would wrong Franklin were she to believe on the basis of his race that he was an attendant. Schroeder (2018) also appeals to the risk of a 'doxastic wronging', but locates the wrong principally in forming a false diminishing belief. Moss (2018a) points to the psychological harms of negative stereotyping inferences of this kind; Bolinger (2018) appeals to the harmful loss of opportunity arising from the cumulative effects of many agents making similar inferences.

As you may anticipate, given the variety in what they identify as making the *Cosmos Club* a morally high-stakes context, these authors disagree about what a low-stakes version of the case would be. For Basu, to get a low-stakes context for inferring from someone's race that they hold a low-status social position, we would need to imagine the believer in a social environment that has not been shaped by structural racism—so given how distant such a counterfactual possibility is from our actual world, there is no minimal low-stakes pair for this kind of case. For Bolinger, we can make the case low-stakes by changing the reasons for the woman's belief, imagining that Franklin wore a uniform and her belief is based on that feature instead. While it is not my aim to compare the relative merits of different accounts of moral encroachment, I do hope to map their differences.

part, by the moral demands of our situation, i.e., the moral stakes."). Moss (2018a)'s characterization is slightly broader: "the moral encroachment thesis is equivalent with the claim that the epistemic status of an opinion can depend on its moral features."

1.2 Some initial distinctions

As a first step we should distinguish moral encroachment from some relatively uncontroversial ways that moral factors can bear on our epistemic activities. Suppose we ask whether moral factors that do not affect the truth of p can make a difference to whether Jones should believe that p, and you say yes.[4] It does not yet follow that you endorse moral encroachment of any stripe! As Enoch (2016) emphasizes, we can disambiguate 'should Jones have a certain epistemic attitude that p?' into three sub-questions:

 (I) *Deliberative Question*: Should Jones initiate inquiry into the question of whether p?

 (II) *Epistemic Question*: Does the attitude in p have the relevant positive epistemic status for Jones?

(III) *Practical Question*: Should Jones perform the actions that would be rational given the positive epistemic status of her attitude in p?

Allowing that moral reasons bear on (I) or (III) is not moral encroachment. Initiating inquiry is an action, and it may sometimes be an action we morally ought to refrain from. Let's borrow Enoch's example to make this clearer: should you believe that you are the smartest member of your department? There might be something morally inappropriate about investing your energies into this question—even (especially?) if you would discover that in fact you are. We could express this by saying *you should not believe that you are the smartest member of your department*, but this would just be shorthand. We need not think that the inappropriateness of *investigating* impinges on what it would be appropriate for you to *believe*, given the evidence you would have if you investigated.

Similarly, we might happily accept that moral considerations affect whether you should assert that you are the smartest, or be smug, or act in other ways that an agent who believes they are the smartest would ordinarily act. A moral encroachment skeptic—I don't here use 'evidentialist' as an antonym for 'advocate of moral encroachment', because, as I'll discuss in §3.2, the relationship between evidentialism and encroachment is a bit delicate—can happily allow all of this; the disagreement is only over (II). This is the 'narrowly epistemic' question, supposed to fix just on the relation between the agent's reasons for taking a particular epistemic attitude (belief, acceptance, etc.), and the standards for its having the positive epistemic status (being justified, counting as knowledge, being epistemically permissible or rational, etc.) that makes the attitude apt. Bracketing concerns about whether you should investigate or act on the proposition, suppose you acquire substantial evidence that you are the smartest. Should you form the corresponding belief?

Dividing inquiry in this way into deliberative, epistemic, and practical questions oversimplifies, of course. As Stroud (2006) observes, in addition to deciding *whether* to initiate inquiry, we must also make choices about how much effort to put into it, how long to keep at it, how much energy to pour into seeking counter-evidence, which of several permissible interpretative frames to use for ambiguous evidence, etc. Some of these later questions—which amount to when to close inquiry and how high the epistemic standards should be—can be glossed as properly within the domain of the narrowly epistemic question. But others (e.g. how much attention to devote to an inquiry) are harder to classify, and plausibly don't fit neatly into a single category of I-III above. There is simply more nuance here than the short space of this paper can afford; I can only hope that the general point comes through clearly enough, and hint that this difficulty in dividing practical from epistemic questions itself speaks in favor of the relevance of practical and moral concerns to epistemic determinations.[5]

To make it clear that she is not merely pointing out that moral facts are relevant to (I) and (III)—of course they are— it is natural for the advocate of moral encroachment to couch her claim as concerning *the believing itself*, not merely the actions on either side. This is strongly reminiscent of the claims, made in the adjacent Pragmatic Encroachment debate,

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[4]Obviously one trivial way in which moral facts affect what one should believe is if the belief's content concerns *whether those moral facts obtain*. I take it this version of dependence is uninteresting, as it does not reveal anything about the interface of moral and epistemic norms.

[5]My thanks to Georgi Gardiner for discussion on this point.

that practical and pragmatic considerations encroach on knowledge or justified belief *itself*, and not only on rational action. The parallel name foregrounds this similarity, and in fact, some advocates of moral encroachment pitch it as "a special case of pragmatic encroachment" (Schroeder, 2018), or straightforwardly analogous to it (Fritz, 2017; Hellman, n.d.). But it's worth going carefully here; though there is significant overlap between the space of views for pragmatic encroachment and those for moral encroachment, there are also deep dissimilarities in the ways that some of these views are developed.

2 All in the family? The relationship between pragmatic and moral encroachment

2.1 Motivations & Methods

2.1.1 The Recipe for Pragmatic Encroachment

Pragmatic encroachment views are unified by a question and a methodology. They all articulate an answer to the question, "how do the practical costs of error in an agent's deliberative context affect *what it takes to know* (or justifiedly believe) *that p in that context*?". To motivate the approach, they assert some version of a knowledge-action link,

> KNOWLEDGE-ACTION LINK: if an agent knows that p, she is rationally permitted to deploy p as a premise in practical deliberation.[6]

and then present case pairs which hold fixed an agent's degree of evidential support, but vary the pragmatic features of her deliberative context. For instance, cases in which the relevant proposition p is

- whether a sandwich is almond-butter or peanut butter, when (low-stakes) one prefers almond butter, or when (high-stakes) one is allergic to peanuts. (Ross & Schroeder, 2014, 261)

- whether a bank is open on Saturday, when (lowstakes) it will be inconvenient if not, or when (high-stakes) one will default on a mortgage if not. (Stanley, 2005, 3-4)

- whether a train stops at Foxboro, when (lowstakes) it will be mildly inconvenient if not, or when (high-stakes) your career depends on it.(Fantl & McGrath, 2002, 67)

Observing that the differences between the low and high-stakes variants appear to make a difference to whether the agent has adequate justification to rationally deploy p as a premise when making one of these decisions, advocates urge us to conclude that (given the knowledge-action link), the pragmatic features must affect whether she knows that p.

2.1.2 Recipes for Moral Encroachment

The methods used to motivate moral encroachment are less unified. Some advocates maintain a close parallel to the strategies used to argue for pragmatic encroachment (see especially Fritz, 2017; Pace, 2011).[7] But most depart from that model in various ways, some quite explicitly (see especially Basu, 2019a). In many cases, rather than the *Knowledge-Action link*, something more like NO CONFLICTS appears to be at work, at least implicitly:

> NO CONFLICTS: If an epistemic attitude is epistemically impeccable, it must be morally permissible.[8]

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[6]For instance, Fantl and McGrath (2009, 66) formulate this as KJ: "If you know that p, then p is warranted enough to justify you in ϕing, for any ϕ. Ross and Schroeder (2014, 262) use the contrapositive for their *Knowledge Action Principle:* if S is in a choice situation in which S could not rationally act as if p, then S does not know that p (where to act as if p is to act in the manner that would be rationally optimal on the supposition that p is true). Hawthorne and Stanley (2008) endorse a biconditional version: "Where one's choice is p-dependent, it is appropriate to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting if and only if you know that p."

[7]Fritz (2017) discusses a pair of cases in which you believe your car is parked legally; one (low-stakes) in which you'd receive a small fine if not, the other (high-stakes) in which if not, a maniacal traffic officer will kill five innocent people. Pace (2011) also models his argument for moral encroachment on pragmatic encroachment.

[8]This sort of principle is defended most clearly in Schroeder (2018) and Basu and Schroeder (2019), who argue that "if moral encroachment is right then it's not possible for a belief to be rational in every way required for knowledge while still being morally wrong."

The role of NO CONFLICTS closely resembles the function of the KNOWLEDGE-ACTION LINK in arguments for pragmatic encroachment: it articulates the central intuition animating many advocates, but is likely to be rejected by critics. Fritz (2019) is a notable exception in that he rejects NO CONFLICTS, seeking to establish moral encroachment through appealing only to the KNOWLEDGE-ACTION LINK.

Advocates of moral encroachment present cases in which the agent has substantial evidential support for an epistemic attitude in p, yet would seem to do something wrong (or at least blameworthy) were she to adopt that attitude. We are invited to conclude that the moral features of the case must explain why the attitude is not, after all, impeccable; that they somehow undermine the positive status her evidence would otherwise secure. As for the nature of the cases offered, one common profile presents a pair of cases in which the agent is forming a belief about some particular individual, and varies either the kinds of evidence or objects of belief to elicit a contrast in appropriateness. Buchak (2014) considers a case where you believe that Jake stole your phone, on the basis of either statistical evidence (not rational), or the testimony of a fairly reliable eyewitness (rational). Moss (2018a) compares a case where a pedestrian believes a man is probably dangerous based on "her knowledge of general statistics about race and crimes of robbery" (not knowledge) with one in which she bases a belief that a pitbull is probably dangerous on the general statistics about the breed (knowledge).

Another strategy appeals to the feeling that belief is inappropriate in singleton cases in which the agent has evidence on which it is highly likely to be true, but where believing falsely would insult, demean, belittle, or otherwise participate in morally wronging the person the belief is about. Some of these involve race or sex-based inferences: in addition to the *cosmos club* case I mentioned at the start, Basu (2019c) discusses a waiter who bases his belief that a black diner will tip worse than white diners on statistics about comparative tipping rates for each demographic group. Schroeder (2018) offers a case where a hiring manager believes, based on demographic distributions in his field, that a married job candidate will, if hired, take advantage of maternity benefits shortly after. As Gardiner (2020) points out, these cases introduce a new stakeholder, absent from cases used to motivate pragmatic encroachment. In addition to being sensitive to the ways that errors might be costly for the believing agent and the subject of the belief, these draw our attention to the possible costs to the other members of the social group invoked by the inference. Others appeal to cases where given the moral relationship between the believer and subject of belief, it is wrong for the agent to form the belief, even on significant evidence. For instance, Basu and Schroeder (2019)'s *wounded by belief* case involves your partner mistakenly believing that you have failed in your resolution to not drink.

Insofar as each of the authors surveyed immediately above are taken to be advocating some variety of moral encroachment, the narrowest characterization we can give is that it is a family of views which focus on morally charged cases and appeal to moral factors in addressing the SUFFICIENCY FAILURE question,

> SUFFICIENCY FAILURE: Why is evidence that provides a high degree of probabilistic support for p sometimes not sufficient to ensure that the agent's [belief or other relevant epistemic attitude] in p is [knowledge or other relevant positive epistemic status]?

This situates moral encroachment one level up from pragmatic encroachment. Standard articulations of pragmatic encroachment are one family of *answers* to this general question, which explain how and when high practical stakes raise the threshold of probabilistic support for p that is necessary for the relevant positive epistemic status. But there are other ways to answer SUFFICIENCY FAILURE, including by appeal to relevant alternatives frameworks, or by invoking modal constraints on knowledge/justification. If we understand moral encroachment theories as simply *the family of theories that appeal to moral factors to answer SUFFICIENCY FAILURE*, then it will encompass more than merely the moral analogues of pragmatic encroachment, because it addresses the more general question rather than just the sub-question about stakes. It will include more radical views (on which moral norms *directly* prohibit or require agents to have certain beliefs), as well as more modest approaches, which offer explanations ultimately grounded in moral features, but allow them to have their effects via familiar epistemic mechanisms (like degree of support, robustness, un-eliminated relevant alternatives, etc).

2.2   Choice points for Pragmatic Encroachment

With this groundwork laid, we can now map the choice points to compare the space of views that have been explored in pragmatic encroachment with the space of moral encroachment views that have been developed so far. Let's start with the familiar territory: pragmatic encroachment.

The first main choice point concerns which attitudes are affected. Pragmatic encroachment has been developed largely as a thesis about all-out states, like full belief, acceptance, premising, etc., (though Gao (2018) contends that it also affects degreed attitudes like credences). The second choice is about the relevant positive epistemic status: is the primary consequence of encroachment a narrowing of *rationally permitted* epistemic attitudes? Or does it change which attitudes count as *justified*? Or which count as *knowledge*, without affecting justification? The most common approach has been to say that while it does not affect the justification the agent's evidence provides, it *does* change whether that degree is sufficient for justified belief in the context, and hence affects whether their belief counts as knowledge.[9]

Third we consider what the relevant extra-evidential reasons consist in, and where they interface with the epistemic attitude. The characteristic reasons offered for pragmatic encroachment are facts about the consequences of the attitude's performing its normal role in her rational ecology. For example, the absolute stakes of p-relevant decisions she faces, or the costs of error for p (Ross & Schroeder, 2014; Schroeder, 2012), or the marginal costs of being mistaken whether p (Weatherson, 2005), etc., which are relevant insofar as knowing or believing that p will ordinarily dispose agents to conditionalize on p when choosing how to act. The differentiation among views here is not about what sorts of factors do the encroaching, but about how to understand and model this talk of 'stakes': what, precisely, is a high-stakes situation?[10]

The major points of variation in pragmatic encroachment views arise only at the fourth choice point: how to articulate the mechanics of the interaction of the extra-evidential factors and the epistemic status of the relevant attitude. There are two axes worth highlighting here. The first locates a view with respect to whether it models non-evidential considerations as operating as reasons for/against belief in precisely the way that evidence does: directly contributing to an agent's overall justification for believing p or believing $\neg p$. If it does, it is a *Hard Encroachment* view (a label I borrow from Worsnip, in press). These, Fritz (2019) and Worsnip (in press) argue, are susceptible to a 'wrong kinds of reasons' charge, since they allow that (e.g.) a bribe can give an agent the same sort of justification for believing p as evidence suggesting the truth of p would. Few advocate this form of pragmatic encroachment; most instead endorse a version of *Moderate Encroachment*, on which rather than directly changing how much justification an agent has, practical reasons change the *threshold* of probabilistic support required for adequate justification for belief (and thus for knowledge). There is some divergence in the details, corresponding to underlying differences in how the respective advocates model belief.[11]

The second key axis is whether the view treats the operation of non-evidential considerations as symmetric: can they count in favor of an epistemic attitude, lowering the bar, so to speak; or do they only count against? Let's say that a view on which pragmatic considerations operate asymmetrically, raising the threshold but not lowering it is *Cautious Encroachment*, whereas a view on which the effect is symmetric is *Robust Encroachment*.

Pascal's wager, which presents the comparative benefits of believing in a God, given that there is one, as reason *in favor of* such a belief, is a Hard Encroachment view. And, since treating practical reasons exactly like evidential reasons entails taking them to symmetrically provide reasons both for and against belief, any Hard Encroachment view is also

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[9]Fantl and McGrath (2002); Guerrero (in press); Locke (2013); Ross and Schroeder (2014); Weatherson (2005) all discuss the relevance of practical stakes as raising the threshold for justification necessary to rely on p in practical reasoning. But Hawthorne and Stanley (2008) and Moss (2018a) focus directly on knowledge, rather than justified belief.

[10]For articulations of the challenges involved in modeling the intuitive notion of 'stakes', see especially Anderson and Hawthorne (2019); Russell (2019); Worsnip (2015). For objections centered on the ambiguity concerning how to define a 'situation' and how to determine which stakes are relevant to a proposition, see Brown (2014).

[11]For an opinionated discussion of these differences, see Ross and Schroeder (2014).

a Robust view. But practical reasons can also operate quite differently from evidential reasons, leading to a variety of Moderate Encroachment views. Paul and Morton (2018), for instance, develop a view on which the evidential reasons are usually permissive, defining a bounded range of epistemic attitudes which are consistent with (and so permitted by) the subject's evidence, but underdetermine which attitude she should take. Their argument that the practical value of believing you will succeed at a difficult goal makes it rational to adopt the most generous interpretation of your evidence within this permissible range (and to adopt a higher threshold for what counts as counter-evidence) is an instance of Robust Encroachment. Schroeder (2012)'s account, on which pragmatic stakes are modeled only as *reasons to withhold*, is also a Moderate Encroachment view, but because it models practical reasons as operating asymmetrically—only making belief more difficult to justify, rather than counting in favor—it is a Cautious Encroachment view.

2.3 Choice Points for Moral Encroachment

2.3.1 The overlap: attitudes and epistemic status

With this (admittedly rough and ready) sketch of the terrain for pragmatic encroachment, we're now in a position to evaluate how close the parallel between it and moral encroachment really is. The two track reasonably closely with respect to the first two choice points.

On the first (*which attitudes are affected*), like pragmatic encroachment, most theorists have only argued that moral encroachment affects all-out epistemic states, though Johnson-King and Babic (in press) are a noteworthy exception. They argue that while rational credences are constrained by accuracy, epistemic norms underdetermine how the relative disvalue of false-positive errors relative to false-negatives, and so permit a range of scoring rules. They contend that moral reasons against belief apply in a degreed way to credences, furnishing reasons to adopt an asymmetric rule that weighs 'morally pernicious' errors—such as mistaken confidence that a woman employed by a university is an administrative assistant rather than faculty member—more heavily than errors in the other direction. The effect is to constrain agents' rational priors, which indirectly shapes what credences she should have in morally significant propositions without threatening the stability of updating on evidence or sacrificing the integration and overall coherence of the agent's epistemic states.[12]

While other theorists do not directly advocate encroachment on credences, this does not mean that degreed attitudes have entirely escaped their attention. Moss (2018a) focuses centrally on articulating when and why probabilistic beliefs are justified but fail to constitute probabilistic knowledge. Fritz and Jackson (n.d.) argue that some theorists—specifically, advocates of Radical Moral Encroachment—who don't advocate moral encroachment on credences are nevertheless committed to it. Finally, several authors who deny encroachment on credences (Bolinger, 2018; Fritz, 2019; Gardiner, 2018; Munton, 2019) have argued that in many of the cases used to motivate moral encroachment, the agent's evidence does not even license rational high credence by ordinary epistemic standards.

As for the second choice point (*which positive epistemic status is affected*), moral encroachment has been pursued as a thesis about the justification (Basu, 2019c; Fritz, 2017; Guerrero, in press; Pace, 2011), rationality (Bolinger, 2018; Buchak, 2014), or epistemic irreproachability (Schroeder, 2018) of belief, but some authors have centered their discussion on knowledge without threatening justification (Moss, 2018a).

2.3.2 Which features do the encroaching?

The explosion of logical space happens at the third choice, when we try to articulate the nature of the reasons that explain why, despite significant evidential support, the attitudes in question lack the relevant positive epistemic status. They're 'moral' reasons, yes, but the examples and arguments used to motivate moral encroachment invoke factors from a much broader range than we observe in arguments for pragmatic encroachment. They are considerations to do with

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[12]The prescriptive conclusions Johnson King & Babic reach appear to enjoy some intuitive support, as well. In recent empirical work, Cusimano and Lombrozo (n.d.) found that about half of the study subjects felt it was appropriate for agents to be slower to increase their confidence in morally pernicious propositions (and faster to increase confidence in morally supported propositions) than in neutral controls.

"the belief itself", and so far we've identified that only in opposition to the decision to open inquiry, on the one hand, and acting on one's beliefs, on the other. But there is still substantial variation in what we could mean by 'reasons arising from the belief itself', and one might well accept moral encroachment from some and not other points of contact between moral reasons and epistemic permissions. The link is made by claiming that we have moral duties to avoid certain epistemic behaviors, which militate against the positive epistemic status of the attitude. Appealing to a moral *duty* restricts the scope of the encroachment claim: the mere fact that an epistemic attitude is *in some way morally bad* or harmful does not in itself suffice to affect an agent's epistemic permissions. It is only when the attitude is wrong or blameworthy that it comes into contact with NO CONFLICTS, and is subject to moral encroachment. We can sort the factors that could generate moral duties concerning our epistemic behavior into three rough categories, according to where they are located in the belief-formation process:[13]

- *Production Process* – upstream factors to do with *how the belief came about.* This includes things like the agent's patterns of attention, the type of evidence relied on, the inferential habits instantiated, and the attitude/stance taken toward the subject of the belief.

- *Epistemic State* – factors based in *being in the belief state*, independent of how it came about. This is a narrow category, limited to the propositional content of p; the doxastic conviction or feeling of full confidence in p; or the mental state of accepting p as a fixed point in practical deliberation.

- *Rational Ecology* – factors based in *how beliefs orient actions* of the believer. This is a broad category, including considerations about how belief-that-p's integrates into her overall epistemic state;[14] stakes of relevant decisions; costs of having the attitude that p; risks of p-based error; as well as upshots for the agent's moral appraisals of the object of belief.

These categories are meant to be reasonably exhaustive, but are not mutually exclusive; many accounts invoke considerations from more than one category. Importantly, none of these factors are just problems with actually *acting* on the belief: all would be present even if an agent never happened to perform the acts her belief makes rational, so long as this was not ensured when she formed the belief. Nor are they problems exclusively with initiating inquiry. They are thus all narrowly epistemic, in that they concern one or another aspect of the process of coming to have a belief with a particular content, rather than the actions to either side of that process. It is perfectly possible to deny that the moral reasons in one of these categories encroach on epistemic permissions, while accepting that those in another category *do* have this effect, thus endorsing at least one variety of moral encroachment while rejecting another.

Considerations about the stakes of acting on p, however they are modeled, are all concerns about the *Rational Ecology* of the belief: the factors having to do with the consequences of the belief playing its normal role in the agent's deliberations. So classical Pragmatic Encroachment is a non-moral analogue only to the subset of moral encroachment views that address themselves only to *rational ecology*-type factors. Moss (2018a) makes this point as well, emphasizing that only moral encroachment views which appeal to *risks* of beliefs—the moral costs that occur only if the belief is false—are genuinely parallel to pragmatic encroachment.[15] But that is not to say that views that invoke factors from the *Production Process* or *Epistemic State* lack non-moral analogues.

Moral encroachment views that principally focus on establishing that stereotypes or statistics are inappropriate grounds for certain beliefs are concerned with the *Production Process*. These views locate a problem not in the propo-

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[13] These divisions roughly correspond to what Basu (2019c) refers to as factors 'upstream from belief', belief itself, and 'downstream from belief', respectively. However, Basu characterizes the downstream as constituted by "words and deeds", whereas I construe it more narrowly as the *dispositions* to reason, act, or speak in certain ways, which one acquires when one believes that p.

[14] This includes, for example, what Basu (2019c) calls 'risky amplifying beliefs', as well as phenomena Gardiner (2018) discusses under the heading of the ways a belief integrates into the agent's *understanding*.

[15] She also suggests that views which locate the encroachment in *costs* of beliefs—which obtain whether or not the belief is true—are not truly encroachment views, and are vulnerable to the sort of 'wrong kinds of reasons' objection to which Hard Pragmatic Encroachment views are susceptible.

sitional content of belief, nor in the amount of evidential justification for the belief, but rather with believing it on statistical or stereotypical grounds. They also typically leverage factors from the rational ecology of belief to explain why this production process is inappropriate: Buchak (2014) argues that statistics cannot ground beliefs that feed into moral appraisal, because moral notions like praise and blame are all-out, rather than being applied in accord with degreed attitudes like credence. Bolinger (2018) maintains that these kinds of inferences from statistics run afoul of individual's rights against suffering certain forms of risk imposition. Another strain of view maintains that we oughtn't use generalizations as a basis of belief about others because we morally owe it to the individual to consider possibility that they are an exception to the statistic, and we cannot rule it out (Armour, 1994; Basu, 2019b; Moss, 2018b).

These versions of moral encroachment are not analogous with pragmatic encroachment, but if we expand our search just enough to consider other standard answers to the epistemic SUFFICIENCY QUESTION, we can find parallels presented in response to 'lottery cases'. Holding fixed the place of the belief that ticket #428 is not the winning lottery ticket in her rational ecology, whether an agent's evidence justifies that belief may depend on the kind of evidence that it is; on the way it operates to produce belief. If she heard from someone who watched the lottery drawing, she may be justified in believing that #428 is a losing ticket. The same belief wouldn't be justified simply by noting that given the number of tickets it is >99% likely to be a loser, because *that* cannot rule out the relevant possibility that the ticket is an exception: that it is a winner, while all the other tickets are losers. The explanations offered for this non-moral evidential inadequacy are parallel to production-process moral encroachment views. Jackson (2018, 2019) holds that evidence about the odds makes salient the error possibilities, and so it can ground credence but not belief. Pritchard (2016) holds that the error possibilities, while improbable, remain too salient or 'nearby' to eliminate, and so belief would not be safe. Gardiner (2020) notes these parallels, and outlines (without endorsing) how a Relevant Alternatives framework can be leveraged to support moral encroachment.

Moral encroachment views grounded in moral objections to the *epistemic states* themselves have been labeled *Radical Moral Encroachment* (see Fritz, 2019). Basu (in press) and Basu and Schroeder (2019) seem to defend this sort of view.[16] Schroeder (2018) restricts this to an obligation to avoid particular beliefs *when false*, in order to avoid diminishing others by mistakenly believing badly of them. Basu emphasizes that even when true, others are wronged by our believing particular, demeaning contents of them. Both Basu and Schroeder also suggest that the duty is magnified in contexts with a history of oppression and diminishment of this kind. Fritz (2019) contends that views of this kind are subject to a 'wrong-kinds-of-reasons' charge, in contrast to views which ground encroachment in "action and options", which Fritz labels 'moderate encroachment views'. His division of views is incomplete, as it leaves out those that appeal to factors from the production process, but it is helpful to flag the fact that these 'radical' encroachment views mark a significant departure from the rest of the family.

2.3.3   The Mechanism

With all this variety under the surface of 'moral encroachment', as we approach the fourth choice point (*how, and how directly, do these features affect the attitude's status*), it is worth keeping a careful eye on whether the reasons given to motivate a view fit well with the mechanism ultimately offered. Quite importantly, moral encroachment does *not* commit a theorist to thinking that moral norms conflict with, and sometimes overrule, epistemic norms. In fact many explicitly reject this suggestion (including Basu, in press; Bolinger, 2018; Johnson-King & Babic, in press; Schroeder, 2018). Instead, the picture is just that moral norms explain why the range of epistemically permissible attitudes is narrower in some the cases of interest. Speaking very generally, roughly three models have been given to explain how the moral reasons identified in the third choice point operate to undermine the positive epistemic status identified in the second choice point.

The first, *threshold-raising*, is familiar from standard pragmatic encroachment accounts. It represents the positive

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[16] However, it is difficult to classify Schroeder since the mechanism he puts forward is a threshold-raising one, which would not address the underlying moral deficiency if the problem is with the *contents* believed or particular unaddressed error possibilities, rather than with the probabilistic strength of evidence on which it is believed.

epistemic status as conditional on the agent's evidence making p sufficiently probable, and then casts the effect of extra-evidential considerations as raising the threshold for 'sufficiently probable' in the context. Basu and Schroeder (2019); Fritz (2017); Guerrero (2007); Pace (2011) outline mechanisms of this kind for moral encroachment. This mechanism is the right sort of tool for deal with problems stemming from having *too little* evidential justification, given the stakes, but it won't address problems with the *type* of evidence or its failure to address specific kinds or sources of error.

The second, *sphere-expanding*, takes its cue from modal and relevant alternatives analyses of knowledge. It represents the positive epistemic status as conditional on the agent's evidence establishing that p throughout the 'nearby' possibilities. Most commonly, this involves dismissing all relevant alternatives to p, or rendering the agent's belief in p safe for a sufficient range of possible worlds.[17] The effects of extra-evidential considerations is to expand the scope of relevant alternatives, or extend the range of relevantly close worlds, so that the evidence must dismiss more error possibilities than would be relevant if the moral stakes were lower. (Bolinger, 2018; Buchak, 2014; Moss, 2018a) offer mechanisms of this kind; Gardiner (2020) also outlines such a view. Because it changes the evidential strength required, rather than only the degree of probabilistic support, this mechanism can address moral qualms with the type of evidence used.

Note that on these first two models, the effects of moral factors are evidentially mediated: the moral factors explain why the relevant evidential standards are strict, but whether the agent should believe p is determined solely by whether her evidence for p satisfies the relevant standards. Except at the limit—where the standards are made so strict as to be unsatisfiable—both of these models allow that there is *some* amount or kind of evidence that would license believing p, for any propositional content p. So except in their most extreme forms, these mechanisms will not satisfy motivations that appeal to a strict duty to not believe particular *contents*. Consequently these two models are well-suited to moral encroachment views motivated by a need for more or better evidence for certain beliefs, but ill-equipped to address the concerns about believing certain *contents* that motivate Radical encroachment theories.

The third model is *direct influence*, either allowing that moral considerations operate exactly as evidence does in providing reasons for or against belief directly (*Hard Encroachment*) or holding that when they diverge, moral norms 'coerce' the epistemic norms, directly forbidding beliefs that would otherwise be rational. Basu (2019c) is strongly suggestive of this view, and it is the right shape to address concerns (like those raised in Basu & Schroeder, 2019) about believing particular contents.

Just as we can meaningfully ask where a moral encroachment view falls on the *Hard* to *Moderate* axis, we can (and should!) also ask whether it is *Robust* or *Cautious*. That is, whether it models the relevance of moral reasons as asymmetrically making it more difficult for a belief to achieve the relevant positive epistemic status, or whether they can also count *in favor*. The bulk of the discussion about moral encroachment has so far only focused on the effects of stakes-raising, but arguments offered by Basu (in press), Crewe and Ichikawa (2019), and Marusic and White (2018) each are suggestive of robust views, centered on the moral obligations *to believe* someone. Marusic & White argue that when we are equally epistemically permitted to primarily respond to our evidence whether p, or invoke a default entitlement to trust testimony that p, our moral reasons to believe others *as persons* may obligate us to do the latter. Crewe & Ichikawa stress that the moral costs of *failing to believe* someone's testimony can lower the degree of evidential justification necessary for rational belief in a context. Basu (in press) argues that "it's a mistake to say that moral considerations only make it harder to believe", and tentatively suggests that against a background in which the testimony of victims of sexual assault is routinely discounted, "perhaps we have a moral burden to lower our evidential standards for believing the victim". By contrast, the moral encroachment view defended in Schroeder (2018) is Cautious.

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[17] A belief is 'safe' just if, for all nearby worlds in which the agent believes that p for the same reasons, p is true.

3   Relating Moral Encroachment to Other Things

3.1   moral encroachment and doxastic wronging

Moral encroachment theories are often discussed in connection with doxastic wronging, which Basu and Schroeder (2019) characterize as follows:

> "First, doxastic wrongs are directed. When you wrong someone, you don't merely do wrong, you do wrong to them. Second, doxastic wrongs are committed by beliefs. So in particular, the wrong in a doxastic wronging does not lie in what you do, either prior to, or subsequent to, forming a belief, but rather in the belief itself. And third, doxastic wrongs are wrongs in virtue of what is believed. So a belief that is a doxastic wronging does not wrong merely in virtue of its consequences; the wronging lies in the belief, rather than in, or at least, over and above, its effects."

It is controversial whether this class is non-empty, but setting that aside, there are two obvious questions about the relationship between it and moral encroachment: (1) if we think there are doxastic wrongings, does that commit us to moral encroachment? and (2) does embracing moral encroachment commit us to doxastic wrongings? Given our characterization of moral encroachment as occurring when moral duties concerning a subject's epistemic behavior affect her epistemic permissions, it could seem that it simply entails that agents commit doxastic wrongs when they fail to fulfill these duties. But we should go carefully here: no conflicts refers to the *permissibility* of attitudes, and something can be impermissible without being a *directed wronging*. For a duty breach to be a wronging, it must have been *owed to someone*, rather than merely being something the agent had most moral reason to do.

The idea that we can morally wrong each other through our epistemic conduct has currency independent of moral encroachment. One tendril of this thought runs through the ethics of testimony: Fricker (2007), Marusic and White (2018), and Crewe and Ichikawa (2019) (as well as many others), suggest that failing to believe a reliable testifier wrongs her. But many of these authors do not take this fact to affect the conditions for justified belief. They thus argue for the possibility of doxastic wronging, but not for moral encroachment. A second tendril extends to the epistemic obligations of friendship: Stroud (2006) and Keller (2004) argue that we can owe it to our friends to put extra effort into interpreting their behavior charitably, or believing the best of them. Violating these obligations would then presumably wrong our friends, in virtue of the beliefs formed (or not formed). But far from taking these obligations to motivate moral encroachment, Stroud (2006, 514, fn 32) concludes that "The ethics of belief is part of ethics, not part of epistemology narrowly construed." Hellman (n.d.) explores a third avenue: that the moral obligations of non-discrimination include believing, when true, that there are "no innate or biological differences among socially salient groups of people about some range of traits". She suggests that the risks of failing in this obligation may go some way toward justifying belief when the available evidence is equivocal—which would be a robust form of moral encroachment, strongly parallel to Paul and Morton (2018)'s version of pragmatic encroachment.

The connection running the other direction is tighter, but only if we understand the locution "in the belief itself" as including the production process and rational ecology of the belief, rather than as limited to the content of the belief. Several moral encroachment views can be framed as outlining directed moral obligations to conduct ourselves epistemically in various particular ways, such that believing *p* when these accounts say we shouldn't would constitute a doxastic wronging. Certainly Basu (2019b), Schroeder (2018), Bolinger (2018), and Moss (2018a) fit this pattern. But if we construe doxastic wronging narrowly as moral wrongs done by simply having certain belief *contents*, independently of how they came about or affect future action, then advocates of Modest moral encroachment views are either explicitly non-committal or skeptical (see especially Bolinger, 2018; Fritz, 2019). Presumably it is this more narrow understanding that Begby (2018) has in mind in arguing that "securing a role for moral encroachment is not yet sufficient to establish the viability of the doxastic morality approach."

I'll make no attempt to adjudicate these debates here, but I think we should concede that the link between moral encroachment and doxastic wronging is not airtight. The claim that there is an entailment in either direction is a substantive rather than conceptual one.

3.2   What view of the epistemic does moral encroachment deny? moral encroachment and evidentialism

It is tempting to think of moral encroachment as opposed to evidentialism. But whether the two conflict at all depends on how we characterize evidentialism—just as it did in the case of pragmatic encroachment. If we take it to be the anodyne thesis that "one's beliefs should be based only on adequate epistemic reasons" (Pace, 2011, p.241), evidentialism is consistent even with Robust Moral Encroachment: the moral factors simply reshape what is *adequate*, they do not require believing on inadequate epistemic grounds. As Pace, Basu, Schroeder, and other advocates of moral encroachment have noted, something similar applies for Feldman and Connee (1985)'s formulation of evidentialism:

> "Doxastic attitude D toward proposition p is epistemically justified for S at t if and only if having D toward p fits the evidence S has at t."

To make this plausible as a sufficient condition, we should assume that the notion of 'fits the evidence' here includes some unspoken sufficiency standard, rather than merely requiring coherence. But insofar as moral encroachment is a thesis about when and how moral reasons affect whether one's evidence is sufficient for an epistemic attitude to be fitting, it is perfectly consistent with this construal of evidentialism.

If evidentialism is pitched instead as the (slightly more restrictive) thesis that *only* evidential factors contribute directly to a belief's degree of epistemic justification, many variants of moral encroachment—all except Hard Encroachment views—are still compatible with it. They hold that moral factors influence the status of the attitude only indirectly, via the operation of relevant epistemic mechanisms. Importantly, if the moral encroachment advocate endorses an evidentially mediated mechanism (as both the stakes-raising and sphere-expanding models are), then the result of encroachment is precisely that the belief fails to satisfy contextually relevant *epistemic* standards. There is no need to demonstrate the absence of a "narrowly epistemic" flaw in the beliefs she claims to be subject to encroachment, because her claim is that the moral factors are the *ultimate* explanation, not the only possible explanation, for the epistemic shortfall. The role of the moral factors is to explain why the standards are more demanding in this context than when forming beliefs about the weather.

What the advocate of moral encroachment denies, then, is not evidentialism, but *purism*, the thesis that evidence is the only type of consideration that is relevant at all to determining the epistemic status of a belief that p. In this she has good company, since anyone who endorses pragmatic encroachment, relevant alternatives theories, or a contextualist analysis of knowledge must also give up purism.

4   Wrapping up

As evidenced by everything I've said above, the term 'moral encroachment' covers over significant variation among the views to which it is applied. Rather than accept this heterogeneity, one could argue that the label 'moral encroachment' ought to be applied much more narrowly.

We could draw on Moss (2018a)'s argument that to be an *encroachment* view, the stakes invoked must be the risks of believing falsely, rather than costs of believing which occur whether or not the belief is true. This would likely narrow the family to only the branch that invokes factors from the rational ecology of belief, excluding Radical Encroachment views (which invoke factors from the belief-state) as well as those that primarily invoke production process factors. Or we could insist that to be a *moral* encroachment view (rather than merely a subtype of standard pragmatic encroachment), the mechanism offered must give the cited moral factors a direct, rather than evidentially mediated, effect on a belief's status. This would exclude views that are modeled closely on pragmatic encroachment, like Fritz (2017). Or, we could take the defining feature of moral encroachment to be the claim that the relevant moral wrongs arise from being in the belief-state itself, and so narrow the field to only Radical Encroachment views.

I do not see a reason to prefer any one of these narrowings over the wider use. At the moment, I think it is fair to say that the most prominent moral encroachment views are the Radical Encroachment accounts advocated by Basu and Schroeder. Meanwhile the account that preserves the closest parallel to pragmatic encroachment, and so has in

some sense the strongest claim on the name, is the one developed by Fritz. I think this gives us some reason not to narrow the application of the label such that it excludes one of these views, and the term 'doxastic wronging' serves well enough to pick out the claim that beliefs can wrong in distinctive ways. There are also good reasons in favor of continuing to use the label permissively, as we do, for any view that gives moral factors a central role in articulating an answer to the sᴜꜰꜰɪᴄɪᴇɴᴄʏ ǫᴜᴇsᴛɪᴏɴ. But I want to sound two notes of caution, given the underlying heterogeneity, going forward. First, we need to be very careful to coordinate on the same use of the label, or else we are at risk of over-counting disagreement. Second, as a consequence of all this variation, criticisms or counterexamples aimed at one articulation of moral encroachment will probably not generalize to all varieties, and so we should collectively be quite careful in concluding that 'moral encroachment' does not occur.

So, to summarize. We've noted four choice-points for encroachment views, and along the way we have identified three axes on which to locate a view:

1. What epistemic attitudes are affected? *(all-out states like belief only, or credences too?)*

2. What positive epistemic status is affected? *(justification, knowledge, rational permissibility, . . .)*

3. What are the relevant moral features?

   - Do the extra-evidential considerations arise from the epistemic state itself (*Radical Encroachment*), or just from the rational ecology (*Modest Encroachment*) or production process?

4. How exactly, and how directly, do these features affect the attitude's status?

   - Can extra-evidential considerations operate as reasons just like evidential reasons (*Hard Encroachment*), or do they interact indirectly (*Moderate Encroachment*)?

   - Do extra-evidential considerations only make the standards for belief more demanding (*Cautious Encroachment*), or can they also make the standards easier to satisfy, relative to some neutral baseline (*Robust Encroachment*)?

We've also clarified that while most forms of moral encroachment are consistent with evidentialism, they must deny purism. Finally, I've suggested that while the phenomena of doxastic wronging is a close cousin of moral encroachment, there is room to doubt that either entails the other.

I haven't made any attempt to convince you to accept moral encroachment, if you don't; or which version to accept, if you're so inclined. I have only been concerned to catalogue the wide varieties of views found under the heading 'moral encroachment', in hopes that doing so will lend greater clarity as we debate their comparative merits.

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