Anti-luck epistemology and pragmatic encroachment

ANTI-LUCK EPISTEMOLOGY

AND PRAGMATIC ENCROACHMENT

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ABSTRACT. A distinctive approach to the theory of knowledge is described, known as *anti-luck epistemology*. The goal of the paper is to consider whether there are specific features of this proposal that entails that it is committed to *pragmatic encroachment*, such that whether one counts as having knowledge significantly depends on non-epistemic factors. In particular, the plausibility of the following idea is explored: that since pragmatic factors play an essential role when it comes to the notion of luck, then according to anti-luck epistemology they must likewise play an essential role in our understanding of knowledge as well. It is argued that once anti-luck epistemology is properly understood—where this means, in turn, having the right account of luck in play—then this putative entailment to pragmatic encroachment does not go through.

0. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Elsewhere I have argued extensively for an approach to epistemological questions, including the core epistemological project of offering an account of knowledge, in terms of a methodology that I call *anti-luck* (or *anti-risk*) *epistemology*.[1] Applied to the theory of knowledge, this approach has the consequence that there is an anti-luck condition on knowledge, as part of a wider theory of knowledge that I call *anti-luck virtue epistemology*.[2] One worry about this kind of claim, however, is that it seems plausible that whether an event counts as lucky is often in substantial part determined by pragmatic factors.[3] Hence, if knowledge includes an anti-luck condition, then that seems to imply that purely pragmatic (and thereby non-epistemic) factors can have a bearing on whether this condition is met. If

that's right, then it seems that anti-luck epistemology, and thus anti-luck virtue epistemology, is straightforwardly committed to a pragmatic encroachment thesis regarding knowledge. In particular, it would appear that there are particular features of anti-luck epistemology which generate a pragmatic encroachment thesis, as opposed to this thesis being motivated on independent grounds and then merely applied to anti-luck epistemology. Given that pragmatic encroachment about knowledge is at least a contentious claim, then that's potentially bad news for anti-luck epistemology (and thus for anti-luck virtue epistemology too).[4]

I argue that this line of reasoning should be rejected. In particular, I claim that the putative pragmatic influences on the anti-luck condition are overstated, such that there is no basis for the claim that there is a route to a substantive pragmatic encroachment thesis about knowledge via anti-luck epistemology specifically (which is not to deny that there might be an independent basis to endorse pragmatic encroachment about knowledge). In §1, I outline the anti-luck epistemology programme. In §2, I describe pragmatic encroachment and critically discuss some unpromising ways of extracting a pragmatic encroachment thesis from anti-luck epistemology. In §3, I turn my attention to a more compelling—albeit, I argue, ultimately unsuccessful—way of showing that anti-luck epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment, which concerns the significance condition on luck. In §4, I offer some concluding remarks.

1. ANTI-LUCK EPISTEMOLOGY

Anti-luck epistemology is meant to offer a new methodology for approaching the question of the theory of knowledge. Hitherto it had been widely granted that knowledge excludes luck in some significant way—indeed, this was the diagnosis of the Gettier-style cases, in that they involved knowledge-undermining luck—but there had been no attempt to unpack this insight in order to offer an account of knowledge.[5] This is precisely what anti-luck epistemology attempts. In particular, it argues for a three-stage process. First, one needs to offer an account of luck. Second, one needs to specify the particular ways in which luck is incompatible with knowledge. Finally, one needs to put these elements together to determine an anti-luck condition on knowledge.

Notice how this methodology offers a very different way of confronting the problem posed by knowledge-undermining luck than the usual approach of trading-off different specifications of anti-luck conditions against each other relative to a suite of problem cases. Instead, the methodology

potentially offers a way of gaining an independent grip on why a particular anti-luck condition is the right one to endorse, on account of how it falls-out of the anti-luck epistemology programme. (Indeed, as we will see, the pay-off is even better in this regard, in that anti-luck epistemology doesn't just tell us which anti-luck condition to opt for, but also tells us how we should be understanding this condition).

Sparing the reader some of the details, here is how the anti-luck epistemology programme unfolds. First, the account of luck. I defend the *modal account of luck*.[6] Very roughly, according to this proposal, an event is lucky when it obtains in the actual world but fails to obtain in close possible worlds where the initial conditions for that event are relevantly similar to those that obtain in the actual world.[7] So, for example, consider a paradigm case of a lucky event, such as a lottery win. This event obtains in the actual world, but there are many close possible worlds (indeed, *very* close possible worlds) where the initial conditions for that event are relevantly similar to those in the actual world (e.g., the lottery still takes place and is organised along roughly the same lines, one continues to buy a lottery ticket, and so on) but where one does not win the lottery. The modal account of luck thus correctly predicts that it is lucky. In contrast, consider a paradigmatic case of a non-lucky event, such as the sun rising this morning.[8] This event not only obtains in the actual world, but in all close possible worlds. Hence, the modal account of luck correctly predicts that this is not a lucky event.

Notice that the modal account of luck can capture the sense in which luck comes in degrees. Consider the lucky event of almost being hit by a sniper's bullet. What makes this lucky, on the modal account, is that one is hit by a sniper's bullet in close possible worlds where the relevant initial conditions for the target event remain relevantly the same (i.e., there is still a sniper taking pot-shots, and so on). But we can imagine a continuum of luck in play here. If, in the actual world, the sniper's bullet passed by only inches away, then that one wasn't hit is much luckier (*ceteris paribus* of course) than if it passed by a few feet away, as the closest relevant possible world where one is hit by the bullet will be further out. Moreover, at some point as the sniper's bullet passes by one at some distance in the actual world it will cease to count as lucky at all.

Next, consider the way in which knowledge excludes luck. I contend that this concerns *veritic epistemic luck*, which is luck that one's belief is true, given how it was formed. A good way to bring this notion out is by contrast with *evidential epistemic luck*, which is a species of epistemic luck that is entirely compatible with knowledge. Evidential epistemic luck concerns it being a matter of luck that one has the evidence that one does. Clearly one can gain knowledge through lucky evidence in this way. To consider an example offered by Peter Unger (1968), albeit in support of a slightly different thesis, it

can be a matter of luck that one happens to be outside a door at just the right moment to overhear a conversation, in that a moment earlier or later one would not have been in earshot. But provided that one does adequately overhear this conversation, then there is nothing preventing one from gaining knowledge as a result, provided one properly exploits this epistemic opportunity. This would thus be *bona fide* lucky knowledge.[9]

Evidential epistemic luck is not a sub-species of (knowledge-undermining) veritic epistemic luck. Take the case just described. Given how the subject was forming her belief—i.e., by clearly overhearing a conversation—it is not a matter of luck that her belief was true. In fact, she would effectively be guaranteed to form a true belief in this proposition in these epistemic conditions, at least as the case is currently described anyway (i.e., such that she is so constituted as to properly exploit this epistemic opportunity). In contrast, consider a paradigm case of knowledge-undermining epistemic luck, such as a Gettier-style case. Imagine, for example, that one sees what looks like a sheep in a field, and so forms the belief that there is a sheep in the field. The familiar twist in the tale is that what the subject is looking at is not a sheep at all, but a sheep-shaped object of some kind. Nonetheless, the belief is true, as there is a genuine sheep hidden from view in the field behind the sheep-shaped object.[10] It is widely granted that this belief does not amount to knowledge, even though it is both true and justified, and the usual reason given for this is that it is just too lucky to count as knowledge. Notice, however, that the kind of epistemic luck in play here is not a benign form like evidential epistemic luck, but is rather specifically the malign epistemic luck that given how the subject's belief was formed (i.e., by looking at the sheep-shaped object) it was just a matter of luck that her belief was true. This is veritic epistemic luck.

Putting the modal account of luck together with veritic epistemic luck, we can now formulate our anti-luck condition on knowledge. The claim that knowledge excludes veritic epistemic luck now amounts to the thesis that when one knows one has a true belief formed on a basis such that in close possible worlds where one forms one's belief on a relevantly similar basis as in the actual world, one's belief continues to be true.[11] Anti-luck epistemology thus provides us with independent grounds for preferring what is known as a *safety* condition on knowledge over alternative conditions (most notably other modal conditions, such as the *sensitivity* condition). Safety holds that knowledge entails a safe true belief, where this means a true belief that couldn't have easily been false.[12] Anti-luck epistemology provides us with a modal unpacking of this idea, in terms of knowledge-excluding false belief formed on a relevantly similar basis in close possible worlds.

Moreover, this modal unpacking gives us a way of thinking about what safety demands, and why. In particular, remember that luck comes in degrees, with luckier events obtaining in closer relevant possible worlds than less luckier events (*ceteris paribus*, of course). This means that we need to think of the close possible worlds at issue in this modal unpacking of safety as being effectively 'weighted' in terms of their closeness to the actual world. Where the level of veritic epistemic luck involved is very high (i.e., where there is false belief formed on a relevantly similar basis in very close possible worlds), then knowledge is clearly incompatible with it, but as that level of luck lowers (i.e., where the closest relevant possible world where one forms a false belief on a relevantly similar basis is further out), then one gets closer to the threshold for knowledge. This means that at some point the possible world where this basis for belief leads to false belief becomes so remote that it no longer counts as a case of veritic epistemic luck.

Although anti-luck epistemology in itself only supplies a necessary condition for knowledge, it can contribute to a wider theory of knowledge that offers both necessary and sufficient conditions (a proposal that I call *anti-luck virtue epistemology*). Some other advantages of the view include that it can offer a principled way of dealing with a range of cases that are held to be problematic for safety-based accounts of knowledge, such as scenarios involving beliefs in necessary propositions.[13] This is not the place to canvas support for anti-luck epistemology, however. Rather our concern is whether there are features of this proposal that lead to a pragmatic encroachment thesis about knowledge, and in particular leads to such a thesis because of its appeal to the notion of luck.

2. PRAGMATIC ENCROACHMENT AND ANTI-LUCK EPISTEMOLOGY

Following an influential statement of the view, we will take pragmatic encroachment about knowledge to consist in the denial of the following thesis:

> [*Purism*] For any two possible subjects, *S* and *S**, if *S* and *S** are alike with respect to the strength of their epistemic position regarding true proposition *p*, then *S* and *S** are alike with respect to being in a position to know that *p*. (Fantl *&* McGrath, 2007, 558)

In particular, pragmatic encroachment entails that while *S* might know that *p*, *S** might nonetheless fail to know that *p*, where this difference in epistemic standing does not reflect a difference in the strength of the subjects' epistemic positions with regard to *p*, but only a difference in the pragmatic factors in play.

So, for example, if one holds that practical interests are important to knowledge, then one might claim that how important it is that one knows that *p* can have a bearing on whether one knows that *p*. Accordingly, two agents identical with respect of their epistemic position regarding the true proposition that *p* can nonetheless diverge in terms of whether they know that *p*, provided knowing that *p* is of practical importance to the one agent but not the other.[14] To take a familiar example from the literature, consider two agents who both truly believe that the bank is open, but where a great deal of practical importance rests on the truth of this belief for the first agent but not for the second (e.g., a cheque needs to be banked today, for if not there will be disastrous consequences).[15] According to defenders of pragmatic encroachment, this can make it harder for the first agent to have knowledge, even if it is clear that both agents' beliefs enjoy the same epistemic support. Allowing practical interests to play this role with regard to knowledge thus leads to a denial of purism, and hence an endorsement of pragmatic encroachment about knowledge.[16]

For the purposes of this paper, our question is not whether some form of the pragmatic encroachment thesis is true, but rather the more specific issue of whether anti-luck epistemology in particular is committed to pragmatic encroachment in virtue of its appeal to luck. Relatedly, we are only interested in ways that such an appeal to luck might lead to pragmatic encroachment that are peculiar to the view under consideration. For example, one might argue that since it is a vague matter where the threshold for veritic epistemic luck lies, hence there is bound to be room for pragmatic factors to intervene in determining whether a subject has knowledge in the penumbral cases. Even if this is true, however, this hardly makes a case for pragmatic encroachment that is in any way specific to anti-luck epistemology. After all, conditions on knowledge typically incorporate some degree of vagueness, so if one holds that removing such vagueness requires an appeal to pragmatic factors, then that is not a way of motivating pragmatic encroachment that is unique to anti-luck epistemology.[17]

Our question is thus whether there is anything peculiar to anti-luck epistemology that entails pragmatic encroachment. I will be arguing for a negative answer to this question. Note that given the specific focus of our concerns, it is entirely compatible with arguing for such a negative answer both that pragmatic encroachment is true, and even that pragmatic encroachment is a desirable thesis.[18] As it happens, I would reject both of these claims, but we can set their truth to one side for our purposes.

So how might one argue for the more specific thesis that there is something particular about anti-luck epistemology that entails pragmatic encroachment? The obvious way to do this is by appealing to practical interests in the manner outlined above, whereby how much one cares about the subject matter at issue has a bearing on whether one knows. In order to make this species of

pragmatic encroachment germane to anti-luck epistemology, the thought would have to be that whether or not an event counts as lucky is itself in substantive ways determined by practical interests. In particular, the claim would be that the practical importance of the event in substantial part determines whether or not that event counts as lucky, and hence (given anti-luck epistemology) can in turn influence whether or not one has knowledge. As we will see, such a claim doesn't appear to be very credible on close inspection.

Let's consider an example. Suppose that two agents both win the lottery, but where for one agent this is an event that she cares deeply about (perhaps because she needs the money for a life-saving operation), as opposed to the other agent who is completely indifferent to this event (perhaps because she only has a few days to live, and hence won't get the chance to enjoy the winnings). For this kind of case to be relevant for our purposes, it would need to be the case that the very same event can differ in its degree of luck because of the extent of practical concern that the agent in question has regarding it, to the point that the very same event can count as lucky for one agent but not for the other because of the difference in their practical interests. Given anti-luck epistemology, this would ensure that it is possible that even despite the two agents having true beliefs that enjoy the same level of epistemic support, nonetheless those beliefs could differ in terms of whether they amount to knowledge (because one of the beliefs falls below the threshold for veritic epistemic luck, while the other clears it). And yet, is it at all credible that the radical difference in practical concern of the agents in the case just considered would have *any* bearing on whether the event itself counted as lucky?

Indeed, this case highlights just what would be problematic about such a proposal, in that it seems to confuse a subjective response to a lucky situation with the question of whether there genuinely is luck involved. It is certainly true that someone whose life depends on winning the lottery might *feel* much luckier in getting the win than someone whose life doesn't so depend on this eventuality (even more so when compared with someone who couldn't care less whether she wins the lottery). But why should we conclude on this basis that one event is *in fact* luckier than the other (much less that the very same event counts as lucky for the one person and not the other)? Lots of events can seem luckier to the agent involved for purely subjective reasons, after all, without this having any bearing on whether the event is in fact luckier. That a six-number lottery ticket is drawn with the numbers 1-2-3-4-5-6 will feel like a far luckier outcome than a ticket drawn with, say, the numbers 23-41-5-8-16-32, but of course this is just because of the significance to us of the first set of numbers. In fact, once one reflects on the matter, both events are equally lucky. Wouldn't we naturally say the same about the scenario under consideration? That is, that the lottery win is objectively a lucky

event (i.e., regardless of how individual agents might subjectively feel about it), albeit one that will (understandably) subjectively feel much luckier for the one agent than the other.

In any case, the modal thesis at the heart of the modal account of luck is not compatible with the idea that this event varies in terms of how lucky it is relative to the subjective concern of the subjects involved. Instead, whether an event counts as lucky, and to what extent, is determined by the closeness of the relevant possible worlds where the target event doesn't obtain, which is in turn determined by the nature of the actual world. Our subjective responses to lucky events thus don't come into it. It follows that we need to look a little closer in order to draw the appropriate connection between anti-luck epistemology and pragmatic encroachment.

3. LUCK AND SIGNIFICANCE

A more promising way to motivate the target rationale for pragmatic encroachment is by appealing not to the modal component of luck, but rather to a distinct component that I included in my original account of luck, which I called the *significance condition*.[19] As we will see, this condition brings in subjective factors into one's account of luck, and hence looks like a plausible way of arguing that an anti-luck epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment, especially since most subsequent theories of luck follow my original proposal in also including a significance condition (though as we will see below, some theorists invest more into this condition than I had envisaged).

My rationale for introducing the significance condition was that it was not enough for an event to be lucky that it had the requisite modal profile. After all, all kinds of irrelevant events might have that profile—such as events at the sub-atomic level, or events occurring in the farthest reaches of space—which we have no temptation at all to think of as lucky since we simply don't have (and ought not to have) any interest in them. Accordingly, I argued that lucky events were events with the relevant modal profile which were in addition either in fact significant to the agent or which ought to be significant to the agent. Although there has been further debate, as one would expect, about how this significance condition is to be understood, that one needs to incorporate such a subjective condition into one's theory of luck is now widely accepted.[20] Here, for example, is Nathan Ballantyne on the significance condition:

> "I will here focus on one universally endorsed necessary condition [*on luck*]. It is widely thought that luck involves at least an event (or fact or obtaining state of affairs) that has *significance* for the subject." (Ballantyne 2011, 488, *italics in original*)

Of particular relevance for our purposes is that Ballantyne proceeds to argue that it is this component of a theory of luck which entails that there is at least a strong *prima facie* case for thinking that anti-luck epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment.

Notice that the significance condition doesn't itself introduce the idea of luck coming in degrees in terms of whether we care about the event in question, which is the pragmatic encroachment line we considered above. The core idea is rather that lucky events have to clear a certain threshold of significance—once an event clears the threshold, then it doesn't become luckier for being more significant. The overarching thought behind the significance condition is rather just to exclude insignificant events from being lucky, regardless of whether they have the modal profile of a lucky event. Moreover, the question of whether an event clears the threshold for being significant in the relevant respect is at least partly orthogonal to how much one cares about that event, given that the significance condition can be satisfied by what one ought to find significant (i.e., regardless of what one in fact finds significant). Accordingly, there can be events that one has no interest in at all, but which nonetheless count as lucky because they have the required modal profile and they are events that one ought to regard as significant.

In any case, if there is a significance condition on luck, then this would be a natural way of motivating a pragmatic encroachment thesis. After all, there is now a condition on luck the satisfaction of which can depend on such non-epistemic considerations as whether one happens to regard the target event as significant. Accordingly, given that this account of luck is an ingredient in anti-luck epistemology, which in turn offers a necessary condition on knowledge, then doesn't this entail that such non-epistemic considerations can have a bearing on whether one has knowledge? If so, then we have a route to pragmatic encroachment, and one that specifically arises out of essential features of anti-luck epistemology.

One initial problem with this line of argument is that its plausibility may depend on how much one builds into the significance condition. I always conceived of this condition in a very minimal fashion, in the sense that it was sufficient to make an event significant to the agent that one was at least aware of it, even if it was the kind of event that one ought not to be interested in. For example, I presented the case of a landslide that didn't affect anyone, and that no-one was aware of—e.g., one that takes place on a distant moon.[21] It seems that regardless of its modal profile, this event shouldn't count as lucky, as it simply doesn't matter to anyone. But what would it take for it to matter in the

relevant sense? On the minimal account of significance that I had in mind, it would suffice for someone to take notice of it, even if it remains true that the landslide doesn't affect anyone. Imagine, for example, that one is an astronomer observing this distant event. It may not be at all important to one that this event occurs, but by being aware of its occurrence one takes a minimal interest in it. I took this to suffice to satisfy the significance condition, and thereby put this event into the market for luck.

The motivation for opting for such a minimal account of the significance condition is that demanding anything more than that has some odd consequences. For example, suppose we insisted that the event should be significant in the sense that it is actually something that one cares about—its obtaining is of practical importance to one, say—or was the kind of thing that one ought to care about. But now a whole class of unimportant events are excluded from being lucky which, intuitively at least, should count as lucky. For example, imagine a lottery being held that, as it happens, no-one partakes in, and hence no-one has any interest in the result, even though everyone is aware that it is taking place. Even so, wouldn't we regard the event of the winning ticket being drawn as lucky? The point is that even events which are of no importance to us can count as lucky, just so long as they are significant to us to the minimal extent that we take some interest in them. As we might put the point, lucky events have to be events that we have some interest in (or ought to have some interest in), but they needn't thereby be events that are in our (or contrary to our) interests.

We will consider more demanding conceptions of the significance condition in a moment, but first consider how this minimal conception of the significance condition plays out when, as part of a theory of luck, it is plugged into an anti-luck epistemology. What's interesting in the epistemic case is that our focus of attention shifts from an 'external' event, of which the subject may or may not be aware, to the 'internal' event associated with the subject's formation of the true belief. At least in the normal case, however, one is aware of one's beliefs (one's occurrent beliefs anyway), so if being aware of the target event suffices to satisfy the significance condition, then one would typically expect one's beliefs to trivially satisfy it. And note that this would be so even if the truth of the belief in question is not of any particular importance to one (as is often the case with one's beliefs, particularly those that are spontaneously formed in response to perceptual stimuli).[22] Indeed, even where we aren't aware of a particular belief, it is surely true of most agents, even agents who aren't particularly rational or intellectually virtuous, that they have a standing desire for their beliefs to be true. This is arguably what is required in order to be a believer in the first place.[23] Accordingly, even if one isn't aware of the belief at issue, one's general concern for one's beliefs to be true could suffice to satisfy the minimal

significance condition, in the sense that one has a standing interest in their truth. Putting these points together, translating a minimal significance condition across to the epistemic case as part of an anti-luck epistemology won't obviously place any substantive constraints on cases of epistemic luck, as it is a condition that, in the normal case at least, is easily met. Accordingly, the significance condition doesn't look like a plausible candidate to leverage a pragmatic encroachment thesis.

Suppose, however, that we opt for a more demanding conception of the significance condition? Here is Ballantyne (who also mentions, as it happens, my landslide example noted above, though he is clearly drawing a different conclusion from it):

> "In order for an event to be significant for someone, she must have interests or welfare: if an event is lucky (or unlucky) for her, then it is somehow *good for* (or *bad for*) her. Significance is needed to distinguish a merely unlikely event from a genuinely lucky one. An unlikely landslide that didn't affect anyone, for example, is not lucky because it is significant for no one." (Ballantyne 2011, 488, *italics in original*)

As this quotation makes clear, Ballantyne clearly thinks that the significance condition demands more than simply an awareness of, and thereby a minimal interest in, the target event. In particular, the event needs to be in addition of importance to the agent in some way.[24] With the significance condition so construed, it is unsurprising that Ballantyne holds that this feature of one's account of luck provides a *prima facie* motivation for thinking that anti-luck epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment.

Indeed, one can see how much more Ballantyne invests into the significance condition by how he describes luck specifically in agent-relative terms, such that an event is lucky-for-an-agent, rather than lucky *simpliciter*. This is in contrast to what I had in mind with the modal account of luck, with only a minimal rendition of the significance condition in play, as there is no suggestion on that proposal that lucky events must be good for (or bad for) the agent concerned.[25] But the transition makes perfect sense once one builds importance to the agent into the notion of significance (such that the event in question is good for, or bad for, that agent), which is in turn a necessary ingredient of luck. There is now no such thing as lucky events in themselves, but only lucky events from a particular agent's perspective. In particular, depending on how the importance of the event in question varies from agent to agent, two agents can be fully aware of the same event (thus satisfying the minimal significance condition), and yet while this event is lucky for the one agent it is not lucky at all for the other agent.

We can distinguish between two ways of unpacking the more robust version of the significance condition. The first takes a 'threshold' reading of the general kind that I offered to my

own treatment of the significance condition above. On this construal, once the threshold is cleared the level of significance doesn't then play any further role in determining whether, or to what extent, an event is to be considered lucky. In contrast, the second construal thinks of this condition as providing an axis along which degrees of luck are understood, one which intersects with the axis of modal closeness.

The second construal clearly offers the most compelling route to a pragmatic encroachment thesis. Where a true belief is concerned with an issue of great importance to one, then any error (i.e., false belief, formed on a relevantly similar basis as in the actual world) in one's modal neighbourhood, even if it is not in particularly close possible worlds, might suffice for the true belief in question to count as veritically lucky, and hence entail that this true belief doesn't count as knowledge. Purely practical considerations are thus playing a substantive role in determining whether an agent counts as having knowledge.

But even if one restricts oneself to the first construal, then this still offers a feasible route to pragmatic encroachment. On this reading, while the degree of significance (over and above what is needed to clear the relevant threshold anyway) won't have any bearing on whether the belief counts as veritically lucky, it will nonetheless be the case that practical interests can determine whether one's belief clears the target threshold. In particular, notice that it won't in general be a straightforward matter that this version of the significance condition is met, in contrast to the minimal rendering described above. For example, one would expect that a lot of one's beliefs are formed without it being of any particular practical importance to the agent that they are true (i.e., as opposed to the standing general desire for one's beliefs to be true that we noted above in our discussion of the minimal account of the significance condition, which doesn't concern any particular practical interest in the truth of these specific beliefs). Accordingly, there is still a way to motivate a pragmatic encroachment thesis by appealing only to essential features of anti-luck epistemology, via this construal of the significance condition as part of the theory of luck in play.

I do not dispute the conditional claim that *if* one endorses either of these non-minimal construals of the significance condition as part of one's theory of luck, then one's anti-luck epistemology will be committed to pragmatic encroachment. What I dispute is rather the antecedent of this conditional, in that I maintain that one should not endorse either of the non-minimal versions of the significance condition. I have already explained above why in earlier work I maintained that one should opt for a much weaker (minimal) version of the significance condition, and why this construal of that condition doesn't generate a pragmatic encroachment thesis. Crucially, however, in more

recent work I have argued that we should drop the significance condition on luck altogether, including the minimal construal of this condition that I previously championed, on account that its introduction reflects a fundamental confusion about the nature of luck [26] If that's right, then this whole debate about whether the significance condition on luck leads to a pragmatic encroachment thesis is fundamentally wrong-headed.

My rationale for dropping the significance condition on luck is that we should sharply distinguish between the metaphysics of luck and our practice of luck ascriptions, and that once we do the motivation for adopting a significance condition subsides. In particular, while our luck ascriptions are undoubtedly a guide to the nature of luck, it would be a mistake to thereby hold that our account of the former should be completely beholden to the latter. Indeed, we noted above that there might be all sorts of subjective reasons why two individuals might differ in whether they feel that an event is lucky (i.e., the case of the winning lottery ticket that has the numbers 1-2-3-4-5-6), and yet it does nonetheless seem to be an objective matter whether the event in question really is lucky.

Even so, one might think that such a way of thinking about luck has the awkward consequence of treating events with the relevant modal profile as being lucky regardless of whether any agent would be ordinarily tempted to describe them as such (which was what motivated the addition of the significance condition in the first place). I think we need to be much more circumspect about this claim, however. For while it is undeniable that we don't have a practice of ascribing luck to events that we are uninterested in regardless of whether they have the modal profile of a lucky event, a moment's reflection reveals that the import of this point for the nature of luck is moot. After all, it will inevitably be the case that when it comes to events that we have no interest in we tend not to ascribe *any* properties to them, since we don't consider them at all. Would it follow that such events, being insignificant, don't have any properties? Clearly not. Rather, the point would simply be about our practices of ascription, and how they are inevitably restricted to the items that we are concerned with. In this way, one can consistently argue that lucky events are those events that have the relevant modal profile, *and* that we don't have a practice of ascribing luck to those events that we are unconcerned with, regardless of their modal profile. The former claim is about the metaphysics of luck; the latter claim concerns a distinct truth about our practices of offering luck ascriptions.

So while I grant that there are construals of the significance condition on luck that would generate the results that anti-luck epistemology is committed to a pragmatic encroachment thesis, I claim that (i) the most plausible construal of the significance condition does have this result, and (ii) we should in any case drop the significance condition on luck altogether. Accordingly, even if one is

unconvinced by my claim that it was a mistake to introduce a significance condition on luck—and the popularity of this condition in the contemporary literature on luck would suggest that this will be a common reaction—there is still the point that merely opting for a significance condition doesn't suffice to generate pragmatic encroachment. In particular, one needs to further argue for a specific rendering of it, one that is more demanding than the minimal version that I offer.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the foregoing, we can resist the claim that anti-luck epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment. It follows that any theory of knowledge that is built around anti-luck epistemology, such as anti-luck virtue epistemology, also lacks a commitment to this thesis, at least purely as a result of its endorsement of anti-luck epistemology. Note, in particular, that this is so even if one allows that there should be a minimal significance condition on luck, which is certainly a condition that brings in subjective considerations to one's account of luck. But the point is even more emphatic once we drop the significance condition on luck altogether, since one's account of luck is now exclusively concerned with objective factors. Recall that in making these specific claims we are not arguing against pragmatic encroachment more generally, as this might be a view that has independent merits. The point remains, however, that if one wishes to defend such a thesis then one will need to do so by appealing to other features of knowledge than the anti-luck condition: there is no plausible specific route from anti-luck epistemology to pragmatic encroachment.[27]

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NOTES

¹ Pritchard (2004; 2005; 2007; 2012*a*; 2012*b*; 2015*a*; 2017*b*), and Pritchard, Millar *&* Haddock (2010, chs. 1-4). Note that these days I express the view in terms of the closely related notion of risk, and hence argue for an *anti-risk epistemology*—see Pritchard (2015*c*; 2016; 2017*a*; 2020). Since nothing turns on the differences between luck and risk for our purposes, in what follows I will focus on the former. Relatedly, the defence of anti-luck epistemology offered here with regard to pragmatic encroachment will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to anti-risk epistemology. For further discussion of how the notions of luck and risk are related to one another, see Pritchard (2015*i*). See also endnote 2.

² See especially Pritchard, Millar *&* Haddock (2010, chs. 1-4) and Pritchard (2012*a*; 2017*b*). As noted in endnote 1, these days I focus on the notion of risk rather than luck, and hence defend a closely related view I call *anti-risk virtue epistemology*.

³ I will be explaining the motivations for this claim below. For a recent defence of the thesis that anti-luck epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment, see Ballantyne (2011).

⁴ For some key defences of the pragmatic encroachment of knowledge, see Fantl *&* McGrath (2002; 2007; 2009), Hawthorne (2004), and Stanley (2005). For a recent survey of the literature on pragmatic encroachment in epistemology, see Fantl *&* McGrath (2011).

⁵ For a recent critical exchange regarding the general idea that knowledge excludes luck, see Hetherington (2013) and Pritchard (2013).

⁶ For more on the modal account of luck, see Pritchard (2005, ch. 6; 2014; 2019). See also Pritchard *&* Smith (2004). For further discussion of the notion of luck, including both defences of other proposals and critiques of the modal account, see Rescher (1990; 1995), Coffman (2007; 2009; 2015), Lackey (2008), Steglich-Peterson (2010), Levy (2011), McKinnnon (2014), and Hales (2016).

⁷ The modal account of luck follows the standard line of ordering possible worlds in terms of their similarity to the actual world (i.e., roughly, how much needs to change about the actual world to take one to the target possible world). See Stalnaker (1968) and Lewis (1973; 1987). For further defence of this account of possible worlds in the context of the modal account of luck—including such issues as the world order and border problems, and the relevance of determinism and indeterminism—see Pritchard (2005, ch. 6; 2014).

⁸ Interestingly, Riggs (2007; 2009) argues that it can be a matter of luck that the sun rose this morning, even though there are no close possible worlds where it fails to rise. See Pritchard (2015, §5) for a critical discussion of Riggs' proposal in this regard.

⁹ Note that Unger (1968) was in fact talking about the closely related notion of accidentality rather than luck in this regard. For a discussion of why the notions of luck and accident come apart, see Pritchard (2005, ch. 6).

¹⁰ This example is, of course, from Chisholm (1977, 105).

¹¹ There are some complications in this regard—see Pritchard (2016)—though they aren't relevant to our current discussion.

¹² For some key defences of safety, see Sainsbury (1997), Sosa (1999), and Williamson (2000). See also Pritchard (2002). For a comparative account of how anti-luck epistemology favours safety over sensitivity, see Pritchard (2008) and Black (2011).

¹³ See, for example, Pritchard (2012*b*).

¹⁴ This kind of proposal has been defended, in different guises, by Fantl *&* McGrath (2002; 2007; 2009), Hawthorne (2004), and Stanley (2005).

¹⁵ The bank case is originally due to DeRose (1992), though it wasn't employed in support of a pragmatic encroachment thesis about knowledge (but rather in support of a contextualist thesis regarding knowledge ascriptions).

¹⁶ Henceforth I will drop the qualifier 'about knowledge', and take it as given that the pragmatic encroachment thesis specifically concerns knowledge (i.e., rather than another epistemic standing).

¹⁷ For example, suppose one defends a reliability condition on knowledge. Is there a fact of the matter as to what the exact threshold of reliability is for this condition to be satisfied? That seems somewhat implausible, but it is hard to see how one could reject the idea of a precise threshold of reliability without thereby introducing some degree of vagueness into one's epistemic condition on knowledge.

¹⁸ See Ballantyne (2011) for a defence of the claim that pragmatic encroachment is a *desirable* consequence of anti-luck epistemology.

¹⁹ See Pritchard (2004; 2005, ch. 6; 2006).

²⁰ For some prominent accounts of luck that follow me in incorporating a significance condition, see Coffman (2007; 2009; 2015), Riggs (2007; 2009), and Levy (2011).

²¹ See Pritchard (2005, ch. 6).

²² See Pritchard (2005, ch. 6) for my original defence of this point.

²³ It might matter in this regard whether one is using the notion of belief in a broad everyday sense or in a more specific fashion that is of particular relevance to epistemology. Very roughly, according to the latter usage belief is that

propositional attitude that is a constituent part of propositional knowledge (especially rationally grounded propositional knowledge). The idea that believers must have some standing desire for their beliefs to be true—that their believing in some sense is *aimed* at the truth—looks far more plausible on the narrower conception of belief than when cast in terms of the everyday notion of belief (which might have no such implication). In any case, it is obviously the latter notion that is salient to our current concern with epistemic luck. For further discussion of this narrower notion of belief, and some of its epistemological ramifications, see Pritchard (2015*b*, part two; 2018). For more general discussion of the different notions of belief in play in the philosophical literature, see Stevenson (2002).

[24] See Ballantyne (2012) for further discussion of how he understands the relationship between luck and interests.

[25] For critical discussion of the idea that luck should be an agent-relative notion, see Pritchard (2014, §5). For some key agent-relative accounts of luck, see Coffman (2007; 2009; 2015), Riggs (2007; 2009), and Levy (2011). For a general discussion of agent-relativity and luck, see Milburn (2014).

[26] See especially Pritchard (2014). See also my discussion of the closely related notion of risk in this regard in Pritchard (2015*c*), which I also argue should not be partially cast in terms of a corresponding significance condition. For two distinct treatments of the relationship between luck and risk, see Broncano-Berrocal (2015) and Navarro (2019).

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