

The Pragmatic Encroachment Debate

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Does knowledge depend in any interesting way on our practical interests? This is the central question in the pragmatic encroachment debate. Pragmatists defend the affirmative answer to this question while purists defend the negative answer. The literature contains two kinds of arguments for pragmatism: principle-based arguments and case-based arguments. Principle-based arguments derive pragmatism from principles that connect knowledge to practical interests. Case-based arguments rely on intuitions about cases that differ with respect to practical interests. I argue that there are insurmountable problems for both kinds of arguments, and that it is therefore unclear what motivates pragmatism.

1. Introduction

It's a beautiful sunny morning and we're about to leave the house for work. My hands are full but you suggest that I grab my umbrella anyway. This is Seattle, after all, and I've just spent an hour styling my hair. What should I do? The answer depends, not just on the chances that it will rain, but on what I'll call my 'practical interests'—on the consequences that might follow from taking my umbrella or leaving it, and the values of these possible consequences.

Pragmatists disagree with purists about the relationship between knowledge and practical interests. According to the view I will call 'pragmatism,' knowledge depends at least in part on our practical interests, in the sense that a mere difference in practical interests can entail a difference in knowledge. If pragmatism is true, there will be pairs of cases that differ only insofar as some difference in practical interests requires that they differ, and where, given just this difference in practical interests, a difference in knowledge follows. By 'purism,' I will mean the negation of pragmatism. If purism is true, a *mere* difference in practical interests will never entail a difference in knowledge; to entail a difference in knowledge, the difference in practical interests must be truth-relevant.¹

Why accept pragmatism or, alternatively, accept purism? Two reasons for accepting pragmatism are now familiar. First, pragmatism explains our intuitions about pairs of cases like Low Stakes and High Stakes, below.

Low Stakes: Hannah is driving home on Friday afternoon. She plans to stop at the bank to deposit her paycheck, but, as she approaches the bank, she notices long lines inside. She knows that it does not matter much when she deposits the check, so she considers driving straight home and depositing the check Saturday morning. Sarah says, "Maybe the bank won't be open tomorrow. Lots of banks are closed on Saturdays." Hannah replies, "No, I

know that it will be open tomorrow. I stop in at the bank every Saturday and it's open until noon."

High Stakes: Hannah is approaching her bank on Friday afternoon, as in Low Stakes. Again she notices the long lines, and again she considers driving straight home and depositing the check Saturday morning. But in this case, Hannah knows that she will incur an enormous fine if she doesn't deposit her check before noon on Saturday. Sarah mentions this fine to Hannah and says, "Sometimes banks change their hours. Do you *know* that our bank is still open on Saturdays?" Remaining just as confident as she was in Low Stakes that the bank will be open on Saturday, Hannah replies, "I guess you're right. I don't know that the bank will be open tomorrow."²

Intuitively, Hannah says something true by uttering the sentence 'I know that the bank will be open tomorrow' in Low Stakes, and then says something true by uttering the sentence 'I don't know that the bank will be open tomorrow' in High Stakes. But this is exactly what we would expect if pragmatism were true, since Low Stakes and High Stakes are nearly identical except for the difference in Hannah's practical interests. Our intuitions about cases like Low Stakes and High Stakes provide *prima facie* motivation for accepting pragmatism.

The second familiar motivation for accepting pragmatism is that it fits nicely with our habit of using knowledge attributions to defend and explain our actions.³ Suppose we're making a midnight run to White Castle and I'm speeding toward a red light. As I barrel toward the intersection you eventually yell that the light is red and that I need to slow down. In defense of my driving I respond, "No, it's okay. I know the light will turn green before we get there." Here, I'm taking it for granted that my knowing that the light will turn green would suffice for the rationality of my continuing to speed toward the intersection. But whether it *is* rational for me to drive this way depends in part on my practical interests (on the consequences that might follow from driving this way and the values of these consequences). So, if my knowing that the light will turn green would suffice for the rationality of my continuing to speed toward the intersection, then whether I really do know that the light will turn green also depends in part on my practical interests. But this is exactly what pragmatism claims. So, our habit of using knowledge attributions to explain and defend our actions provides *prima facie* motivation for accepting pragmatism.

Why resist pragmatism, then? The standard motivation for resisting pragmatism is that pragmatism makes knowledge depend on truth-irrelevant factors. By 'truth-irrelevant factors,' I mean factors that have no affect on the probability that the relevant belief is true, either from the point of view of the person who holds that belief, or from any more objective perspective.⁴ Take Hannah in High Stakes. Everyone agrees that the probability that the bank will be open can make a difference to whether Hannah knows that it will be open. Hannah cannot know that the bank will be open if the bank will probably be closed. There's no controversy here, at least within the context of the pragmatic encroachment debate. When pragmatists say that Hannah's practical interests can make a difference to whether she knows

that the bank will be open, they mean that the consequences of the actions under consideration in High Stakes, and the values of these consequences, can make a difference to whether Hannah knows that the bank will be open. This is the controversial feature of pragmatism, for these values and consequences are meant to be truth-irrelevant. For example, on the intended understanding of High Stakes, the fact that Hannah will incur the enormous fine if she does not deposit her paycheck before noon on Saturday does not affect the probability that Hannah's belief that the bank will be open is true, either from Hannah's point of view, or from any other epistemically relevant perspective. If not for the truth-irrelevance of practical interests like these, purists would have no objection to the pragmatist's claim that knowledge depends at least in part on our practical interests.⁵

In this paper, I side with purists against pragmatists. The pragmatic encroachment literature contains two kinds of arguments for pragmatism: principle-based arguments and case-based arguments. After defending pragmatism from what I think is currently the best purist response to principle-based arguments, I defend purism by arguing that neither principle-based arguments nor case-based arguments can succeed, and that it is therefore unclear what motivates pragmatism.

2. The Knowledge-Action Principle

Why would my knowing that the light will turn green suffice for the rationality of my continuing to speed toward the intersection? A common, at least initially plausible answer is that, if I know something, I can rationally ignore any possibility in which it's false. As Fantl and McGrath put it, "[i]f you know something, you can *take it for granted, assume it's true, count on it, take it to the bank, and book it*" (2012a, p. 441, their italics). With this in mind, consider the following principle, defended one way or another by Fantl and McGrath (2002, 2007), Ross and Schroeder (2014), and others.

(KA) *S* knows that *p* in *c* only if she can rationally act as if *p* in *c*.

KA helps explain many of our first-pass epistemological judgements, but it has counterexamples. I will discuss a counterexample at length below. Before discussing this counterexample, however, I want to consider three small problems with KA, and then a more serious problem raised by Baron Reed (2010). I will argue that these small problems and the challenge posed by Reed can be overcome, but that there are problems for KA that ultimately cannot be overcome.

The first thing we must note is that, by 'rationally act as if *p*,' proponents of KA mean something very specific, which doesn't match the intuitive notion of rationally acting as if *p*. On the intuitive notion of rationally acting as if *p*, I might know that *p* while I can't rationally act as if *p* because (for example) I know both that I need to deceive you about whether *p* and that the best way to accomplish this is to act as if $\neg p$. While playing poker, I might know that my cards are terrible even though I cannot rationally act as if my cards are terrible, since I know that I should bluff. In a basketball game, I might know that I'm about to shoot even though I cannot rationally act as if I'm about to shoot. To lose my defender, I might need to

fake a pass. A spy might know that she works for the CIA even though she cannot rationally act as if she works for the CIA, an actor might know that she's sober even though her part requires acting as if she's drunk, and so on. On the intuitive notion of rationally acting as if p , KA has many counterexamples.

What do proponents of KA mean, then, when they say that S knows that p in c only if she can rationally act as if p in c ? They mean that, if S knows that p in c , then she can rationally perform whatever actions maximize expected utility conditional on p in c .⁶ This is good news for KA because, in each of the cases discussed in the paragraph above, the action that maximizes expected utility conditional on the relevant value of ' p ' differs from the action that most people would call 'acting as if p .' (Bluffing might be the action that maximizes expected utility conditional on the proposition that my cards are terrible, for example, but most people would say I'm not bluffing unless I'm acting as if my cards *aren't* terrible.) Even with this stipulative definition of 'rationally acting as if p ,' however, it's still important to be careful. The following case will drive home a point that will be important later.

Dishes: I've decided to have cereal for breakfast. I haven't done the dishes in weeks, so I'm forced to choose between two bowls and a cutting board. Conditional on the proposition that I intend to have cereal for breakfast, the cutting board has the lowest expected utility (the milk would spill everywhere), and the bowls have exactly the same expected utility, since there is no relevant difference between them. Thus, conditional on the proposition that I intend to have cereal for breakfast, no single option has the highest expected utility.

If knowing that p requires that I can rationally perform whatever action maximizes expected utility conditional on p , and if this requires that one of my options has a higher expected utility than any of my other options conditional on p , then I don't know that I intend to have cereal for breakfast. But of course, this is implausible.

Fortunately for KA, there's an easy fix, and it's already motivated by Fantl and McGrath's idea that I know something only if I can take it for granted, assume that it's true, count on it, *etc.* If I can rationally take p for granted, then I can be indifferent between options that have equal expected utilities conditional on p . And of course, if I can be indifferent between two options, then I can rationally choose either of them, so long as no third option has higher expected utility. On the relevant notion of rationally acting as if p , S can rationally act as if p in c just in case she can rationally perform any action in the set of actions that have the highest expected utility conditional on p in c , where an action is a member of the set of actions that have the highest expected utility conditional on p in c just in case the expected utility of that action is at least as high as the expected utility of every alternative action available to S in c .⁷ Properly understood, KA says that I know that I intend to have cereal for breakfast only if I can rationally grab *either* of the bowls. Since I *can* rationally grab either bowl, KA doesn't generate the false conclusion that I don't know that I intend to have cereal for breakfast.

There is one more problem for the letter but not the spirit of KA that's worth addressing. Consider the following case, due to Baron Reed (2013, p. 46).

Roses: I'm about to leave my house for work and several weather reports tell me that there's a high chance of rain. I've promised to water my grandmother's roses while she's out of town, and watering them would require stopping by my grandmother's house on the way to work. It's extremely important that the roses receive water every day. So, in spite of the weather reports, I go by my grandmother's house to water her roses. But on the basis of the same weather reports, I grab my umbrella, expecting rain. Conditional on the proposition that it will rain today, going by my grandmother's house has lower expected utility than going straight to work, but taking my umbrella has higher expected utility than leaving it at home.

In this case, I can rationally perform the action with the highest expected utility conditional on the proposition that it will rain today relative to *one* choice (taking my umbrella) but not the other choice (going by my grandmother's house). According to Reed (p. 47), KA therefore says that I both *do* and *do not* know that it's going to rain today: I know that it's going to rain today relative to my choice between taking my umbrella and leaving it, but I *don't* know this relative to my choice between stopping by my grandmother's house and going straight to work. I agree with Reed that this result is undesirable, but I don't think that it constitutes a serious problem for KA. Instead, I think Fantl and McGrath's idea that I know something only if I can take it for granted, assume that it's true, *etc.*, motivates a simple clarification of KA.

Following Hawthorne and Stanley (2008, p. 578), let's say that S 's choice between options $x^1 \dots x^n$ is p -dependent just in case the set of options among $x^1 \dots x^n$ with the highest expected utility conditional on p is not the same as the set of options among $x^1 \dots x^n$ with the highest expected utility conditional on $\neg p$. As we noted above, the core idea behind KA is that, if S knows that p , then she can rationally take p for granted, assume that it's true, *etc.* Thus, if S is faced with multiple p -dependent choices in c , KA says that she knows that p in c only if, for each of the p -dependent choices she faces in c , she can rationally select any option in the set of options with the highest expected utility conditional on p in c . So, properly understood, KA is equivalent to the following principle.

(KA) S knows that p in c only if she can rationally act as if p in c (where S can rationally act as if p in c just in case, for every p -dependent choice that she faces in c , she can rationally perform any action in the set of actions that have the highest expected utility conditional on p).

This formulation is mouthful, but it captures the intuitive idea that you can take p for granted if you know that p , and it does so without relativizing your knowledge in a situation to the choices that you are facing in that situation. Instead of saying that I know that it will rain today relative to my choice between taking my umbrella and leaving it, but do not know that it will rain today relative to my choice between going by my grandmother's house and going straight to work, this formulation of KA simply says that I don't know that it will rain today.

So far, we have considered cases that only motivate clarifications of KA's consequent. Purists sometimes forward the following case as a straightforward counterexample to KA, however.

Jellybeans: I am participating in a psychological study where the researcher asks me questions about Roman history—a subject with which I am well acquainted. For every correct answer I give, the researcher will reward me with a jellybean. For every incorrect answer, I will receive an extremely painful electric shock. For every question I leave unanswered, I will get nothing. The first question is whether Caesar was born in 100BC. (Reed 2010, p. 228)

In this case, there is only one member of the set of options with the highest expected utility conditional on the proposition that Caesar was born in 100BC: answering the first question 'yes.' Thus, according to KA, I know that Caesar was born in 100BC only if I can rationally answer the first question 'yes.' Is this case a successful counterexample to KA, then? Only if there are significant costs for denying that I know that Caesar was born in 100BC and *also* significant costs for insisting that I can rationally answer the first question 'yes.' For otherwise, anyone who finds KA antecedently plausible can simply reason that, if I can't rationally answer the first question 'yes,' then I really *don't* know that Caesar was born in 100BC.

I think Reed's jellybean case is the closest thing in the literature to a successful counterexample to KA, and I agree that there *are* significant costs for insisting that I can rationally answer the first question 'yes.' After all, the risks clearly outweigh the rewards, and I know this. But I don't think this case *is* a successful counterexample to KA, since the costs of denying that I know that Caesar was born in 100BC do not seem much higher than the costs of denying that Hannah knows that the bank will be open in High Stakes, which is clearly *not* a counterexample to KA. Notice that, in response to the question whether I retain my knowledge that Caesar was born in 100BC, Reed just says this.

[W]hen you weigh the meager reward against the prospect (however unlikely) of excruciating pain, it would not be rational to attempt an answer to the question. Does this show that you don't know when Caesar was born? Not at all. Your shortcoming is merely a lack of certainty when only something in that neighborhood would do. There is nothing odd about continuing to think of yourself as possessing knowledge in this situation, even though it would not be rational for you to do what you know would have the best consequences. . . . It would be perfectly natural for you to say to the researcher, "I do know this one, though it's certainly not worth risking a shock." (p. 229)

Reed is right. It's not clear that I lose my knowledge that Caesar was born in 100BC. But it's also not clear that I *retain it*, and this is the important point. Granted, it would be natural to tell the researcher "I do know this one, though it's certainly not worth risking a shock." But it would also be natural to tell the researcher that I *don't* know that Caesar was born in 100BC. For example, suppose I get ready to answer the question and you grab my arm. "Wait a second," you say. "That

shock will be unbearably painful. Do you *know* that Caesar was born in 100BC?” As Fantl and McGrath point out (2009, p. 62), it wouldn’t raise any eyebrows if I thought for a moment and replied, “I guess you’re right. I don’t know this one.” In this respect, there seems no relevant difference between the jellybean case and High Stakes, which nobody thinks is a counterexample to KA. (This will become especially clear in §5, where I compare High Stakes to the case I call ‘Revised High Stakes.’) Because it isn’t obvious that I retain my knowledge that Caesar was born in 100BC, the considerations that motivate KA in combination with the fact that I cannot rationally answer the question ‘yes’ arguably provide sufficient reason to conclude that in fact I *don’t* know that Caesar was born in 100BC.⁸ The upshot is that, while it’s clear enough that I can’t rationally answer the first question ‘yes,’ it’s not clear that I retain my knowledge that Caesar was born in 100BC, and thus not clear that the jellybean case is a counterexample to KA.

3. A Counterexample to KA

There *are* counterexamples to KA, however. The case below involves an experiment like the one in Reed’s jellybean case, but, unlike in Reed’s case, there’s almost nothing at stake. (High stakes are not the only things that can make an action irrational, after all.) In the case below, it will be clear that I can’t rationally perform the relevant action, but strongly counterintuitive that I lose my knowledge of the relevant proposition.

Survey: I’m walking toward the library after class when a social scientist asks me to participate in an experiment. I’m curious, so I ask how the experiment works. “I will give you a survey that contains 100 questions,” she says. “Each question contains a pair of propositions, at least one of which is true. Your task will be to select a true proposition from each pair of propositions. You can’t select both propositions. If you do, I’ll mark the question wrong. And you can’t look up answers on your phone, or anything like that. If you get at least half the questions right, I will give you this keychain.” She shows me the keychain and I see that it comes attached to a bottle opener, so I want it. As I complete the survey, I eventually reach the following series of questions.

24. The Ford Focus has rear airbags.
 If p entails q and q entails r , then p entails r .
25. On the periodic table, sodium is Na.
 Athens was sacked by the Persians.
26. Jerry Garcia died in 1995.
 Cicadas are diurnal.
27. Plato wrote the *Republic*.
 Either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*.

On all four of these questions, I select the proposition in which I am most confident: first, the proposition that if p entails q and q entails r , then p entails r ; second, the proposition that sodium is Na; third, the proposition that Jerry Garcia died in 1995; and fourth, the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*.

What should we say about this case? Specifically, what should we say about question 27? I think it gives us a clear counterexample to KA.

Let ' p ' name the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, and let ' e ' name the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*. Conditional on the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, selecting p and selecting e have the same expected utility, since (as I'm well aware) there is neither any possible world where Plato wrote the *Republic* and p is false, nor any possible world where Plato wrote the *Republic* and e is false. I get the question wrong if I select neither p nor e , and I also get the question wrong if I select both p and e . Thus, conditional on the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, selecting p and selecting e tie for having the highest expected utility. This means that, according to KA, I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* only if I can rationally select either of them. But as I'm well aware, my reasons for selecting p are swamped entirely by my reasons for selecting e . I know that p entails e , and I know that e also follows from a completely obvious necessary truth: that $1 = 1$. So I know that e is true in all the worlds where p is true, and I know that e is also true in all the worlds where p is false. So I know that e is true even if I'm mistaken about the author of the *Republic* and p is false in the actual world. Granted, there's very little at stake here. If I get the question wrong, this will simply reduce my chances of getting the bottle opener. But I do want the bottle opener, I have literally no reason to select p that isn't an equal reason to select e , I have an excellent reason to select e that isn't any reason to select p (namely, that e is a disjunction that contains an obvious necessary truth), and I know all of this about my situation. So, I should select e . Given the stipulated details of the survey case, I can't rationally select p .

Here it's important to notice that, even if rational agents can sometimes select satisfactory but sub-optimal options, as satisficing theories of rationality claim, it doesn't follow that I can rationally select p on question 27, since I have literally no reason to pass up e , which is my optimal option. By hypothesis, I'm not in a hurry, my hand doesn't happen to be closer to p than it is to e , I don't have any quirky preference for atomic propositions over disjunctions, I don't have any reason to suspect that the researcher doesn't know that e is true, or anything like that. So, in this case, I should select my optimal option, even if it's sometimes rational to select sub-optimal options. Granted, since there's very little at stake, it might not be *highly* irrational for me to select p (my sub-optimal option). But the question isn't whether it would be highly irrational for me to select p . The question is whether it would be rational for me to select p . And since my reasons for selecting e unambiguously outweigh my reasons for selecting p , it seems that, if I were to select p , we would have a paradigm case of irrational behavior (even if only a paradigm case of *slightly* irrational behavior). Of course, I could rationally

select p if my circumstances were relevantly different. But Hannah could rationally go straight home if her circumstances were relevantly different. The question is whether I can rationally select p in my *actual* circumstances in the survey case—just as the question is whether Hannah can rationally go straight home in her actual circumstances in High Stakes—and the answer is: I can't. So, I can't rationally select p on question 27. Since KA says that I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* only if I can rationally select p , KA entails that, when I get to question 27, I lose my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic*.

But this conclusion is hard to believe. As in Reed's jellybean case, it would be perfectly natural for me to tell the researcher something like this: "I know that Plato wrote the *Republic*, but that just entails that e is true. And of course, e is obviously true even if I'm wrong and Plato didn't write the *Republic*, since nothing could be clearer than that $1 = 1$, and that entails e . So, I should select e ." In contrast, the analogue of Fantl and McGrath's response to the jellybean case wouldn't be natural. It would go something like this: "If Plato wrote the *Republic*, then e is true. And of course, e is obviously true even if Plato didn't write the *Republic*, since nothing could be clearer than that $1 = 1$, and that entails e . So, I should select e . So I guess I don't know that Plato wrote the *Republic*." This conclusion *would* raise some eyebrows, since, intuitively, nothing I say in the stretch of reasoning leading up to this conclusion provides the slightest reason to think that I've lost my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic*. While it's not clear that I retain my knowledge that Caesar was born in 100BC in Reed's jellybean case, it seems highly implausible that I lose my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27.

Because it's strongly counter-intuitive that I lose my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27, the considerations that motivate KA in combination with the fact that I cannot rationally select p do not provide sufficient reason to conclude that in fact I *do* lose my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic*. And because it's clear that I cannot rationally select p on question 27, the considerations that motivate KA in combination with the fact that I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* do not provide sufficient reason to conclude that in fact I *can* rationally select p . This is an important difference between the jellybean case and the survey case. The upshot is that, while there seems little cost in denying that I retain my knowledge that Caesar was born in 100BC in Reed's jellybean case, the survey case forces a choice between rejecting KA and saying something strongly counterintuitive: that either I lose my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27 or I can rationally select p even though I understand the setup of the experiment and the logical relations between p and e . Faced with this choice, it seems best to reject KA.

4. Problems for the Rest of the Literature

4.1. Dilemmas for KR and KJ

If KA is false, then no argument for pragmatism based on KA succeeds. But of course, KA is not the only principle in the pragmatic encroachment literature, and

one might wonder whether some other principle survives the survey case. In this section, I will argue that the survey case causes decisive problems for every principle in the pragmatic encroachment literature, except those principles that are consistent with purism. Start with Hawthorne and Stanley's knowledge-reason principle (KR, below).

(KR) Where S 's choice is p -dependent, S knows that p in c iff it is appropriate for S to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting in c . (2008, p. 578)

KR has a lot going for it. As Hawthorne and Stanley point it, it fits nicely with our habit of criticizing people for acting on what they don't know, and our habit of defending our actions by citing what we do know. The problem is, either KR is false because it entails KA (and therefore mishandles the survey case), or KR does not entail KA, in which case KR is consistent with purism. Consider the following principle.

(Link) Where S 's choice is p -dependent, it's appropriate for S to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting in c only if S can rationally act as if p in c .

Since a choice between doing whatever has the highest expected utility conditional on p and doing anything else will *always* be p -dependent, Link and KR jointly entail KA. But, as I just argued, KA is false. It follows that either KR is false or Link is false. Either way, KR cannot be employed in a successful argument for pragmatism.

Suppose that Link is false. In this case, it might be appropriate for S to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting in c even while she *cannot* rationally act as if p in c .⁹ If it might be appropriate for S to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting in c even while she cannot rationally act as if p in c , however, then how is KR supposed to support pragmatism, even if it's true? Pragmatism, recall, is the view that your knowledge depends at least in part on your practical interests. As I noted several times in the opening section of this paper, practical interests are just the values and/or consequences that we should bear in mind as we make a choice with respect to some set of options—the values and/or consequences that would figure into the relevant expected utility calculation. This means that S 's practical interests *vis-à-vis* the proposition that p *just are* the sorts of things (other than the probabilities of p and its negation) that make a difference to whether S can rationally act as if p . If Link is false, however, whether it is appropriate for S to treat p as a reason for acting will not depend on whether she can rationally act as if p . So, if Link is false, why should we think that S 's practical interests make any difference to whether it's appropriate for her to treat p as a reason for acting? It seems that they should not, if Link is false. If S 's practical interests *do not* make any difference to whether it's appropriate for her to treat p as a reason for acting, however, then KR gives us no reason to think that S 's practical

interests make any difference to whether S knows that p . In this case, KR seems consistent with purism. So, given that Link is false, it's unclear why purists can't accept KR.

This horn of the dilemma prevents pragmatists from deriving their view from KR, but notice that it's no problem for Hawthorne and Stanley, since they think purists *can* accept KR. Instead of offering KR as a premise in an argument for pragmatism, they offer pragmatism as a means of deflecting the objection that KR entails skepticism (p. 588). On Hawthorne and Stanley's view, pragmatism is supposed to support KR, not the other way around. And crucially, Hawthorne and Stanley do not offer pragmatism as the only means of deflecting the objection that KR entails skepticism, or even as the best means of deflecting this objection. They simply say that defending pragmatism is *a* means of deflecting this objection. Immediately after discussing pragmatism, they provide an alternative purist-friendly means of deflecting the objection that KR entails skepticism (pp. 588–9). Downstream from defending KR, Hawthorne and Stanley never actually endorse pragmatism. The problem for any pragmatist who wants to derive her view from KR, then, is this: either Link is true, or it's false. If it's true, then KR entails KA, and KR is therefore false for the same reason that KA is false. But on the other hand, if Link is false, then KR is consistent with purism, as Hawthorne and Stanley intend.

Exactly the same considerations apply to the conjunction of Fantl and McGrath's KJ and the linking principle below, except that Fantl and McGrath clearly think that KJ entails pragmatism.

- (KJ) S knows that p in c only if p is warranted enough to justify S in φ -ing in c , for any value of ' φ .' (2009, p. 66)
- (L2) p is warranted enough to justify S in acting as if p in c only if S can rationally act as if p in c .

As Fantl and McGrath make clear (ch. 1), they defend KJ for the purpose of motivating pragmatism, which they think is the best way to defend fallibilism. But since KJ entails that S knows that p in c only if p is warranted enough to justify S in acting as if p in c —acting as if p is one value of ' φ ,' after all—KJ and L2 jointly entail KA. Thus, KJ entails KA unless L2 is false. If L2 is false, however, then Fantl and McGrath seem mistaken that KJ supports pragmatism. If L2 is false, whether p is warranted enough to justify S in acting as if p will not depend on whether S can rationally act as if p . So, if L2 is false, whether p is warranted enough to justify S in acting as if p will not (it seems) depend on her practical interests. But in this case, even if KJ is true, KJ will give us no reason to think that knowledge depends on practical interests. So, if L2 is false, it seems that KJ could be true even while knowledge does not depend on practical interests, since (again) practical interests *just are* the sorts of things (other than the relevant probabilities) that make a difference to whether S can rationally act as if p . KJ and KR are thus both either false because they entail KA, or ill-suited for supporting pragmatism if they do not entail KA.

4.2. A Counterexample to Weatherson's BQ

KA, KR, and KJ all focus on the connection between knowledge and states that might depend on practical interests. Brian Weatherson defends a principle that focuses on the connection between *belief* and states that might depend on practical interests—the principle that I call 'BQ,' below.¹⁰

(BQ) *S* believes that *p* in *c* only if conditionalizing on *p* in *c* does not change *S*'s answer to any relevant question in *c*. (2012, p. 86)

Weatherson gives a nice argument for BQ. As he explains, it provides an elegant solution to the lottery paradox, and it fits nicely with functionalism about belief (p. 87). Unfortunately, BQ suffers exactly the same problem as KA. Return to the survey case. As I am answering question 27, I am making a choice between selecting *p*, the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, and selecting *e*, the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*. As I make my choice, the following question is relevant: which is more probable, *p* or *e*? My answer to this question is that *e* is more probable than *p*. "How could it fail to be," I think to myself, "since *p* is a contingent proposition and *e* is the disjunction of *p* and an obvious necessary truth?" Conditional on the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, however, *p* and *e* are equally probable. As I'm well aware, conditional on the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, they both have probability 1. This means that conditionalizing on the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic* changes my answer to a relevant question as I'm answering question 27. Thus, according to BQ, I don't believe that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I'm answering question 27. Since knowledge entails belief, BQ says I don't know that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27. So BQ has exactly the same implausible consequence as KA, plus an additional one: that I don't even *believe* that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27.¹¹

4.3. The Relevance of Schroeder's RB to Pragmatism

While KR and KJ are either susceptible to the same counterexample as KA or apparently consistent with purism if they are not susceptible to the same counterexample as KA, BQ seems straightforwardly susceptible to the same counterexample as KA. Before turning to case-based arguments for pragmatism, I want to consider one more principle that pragmatists might use to motivate their view: Mark Schroeder's rational belief principle, below.

(RB) It is epistemically rational for *S* to believe that *p* in *c* just in case, in *c*, *S* has at least as much epistemic reason to believe that *p* as to believe that $\neg p$, and *S* has at least as much epistemic reason to believe that *p* as to withhold with respect to *p*. (2012, p. 274)

Looking at RB, two things should strike us. First, RB seems uncontroversial, since it amounts to the claim that *S* cannot rationally believe that *p* if her epistemic reasons for *not* believing that *p* outweigh her epistemic reasons *for* believing that *p*. Second, RB seems consistent with purism. After all, why can't purists agree

that *S* cannot rationally believe that *p* if her epistemic reasons for not believing that *p* outweigh her epistemic reasons for believing that *p*?

Schroeder thinks that RB entails pragmatism (at least in combination with other plausible principles), and his argument from RB to pragmatism contains several interesting ideas. First, Schroeder distinguishes between reasons to believe a proposition and reasons to withhold with respect to that proposition, and then argues that reasons to withhold cannot be evidence.

[T]he evidence is exhausted by evidence which supports *p* and evidence which supports $\neg p$. But the evidence which supports *p* is reason to believe *p*, and the evidence which supports $\neg p$ is reason to believe $\neg p$. Consequently the reasons to withhold must come from somewhere else. So they cannot be evidence. (p. 276)

What are the reasons to withhold, then? Schroeder does not offer a complete list, but he does say that the costs of error can be an important reason to withhold.

[A] natural place to look for reasons to withhold is in the costs of error. When you form a belief, you take a risk of getting things wrong that you do not take by withholding. In contrast, when you withhold, you guarantee that you miss out on getting things right. So plausibly, one important source of reasons to withhold will come from the preponderance of the cost of having a false belief over the cost of missing out on having a true belief—or, as I will put it, the preponderance of the cost of *type-1 error* over *type-2 error*. (p. 277)

This paragraph seems plausible enough. But so far, it lends no support to pragmatism, for the cost of a type-1 error might just be the possession of a false belief, and the cost of a type-2 error might just be the absence of a true belief. If these are the only costs of type-1 and type-2 errors, however, then *practical interests* seem beside the point. For example, if these are the only costs of type-1 and type-2 errors, then the costs of type-1 and type-2 errors will be the same for Hannah in High Stakes as they are for her in Low Stakes.

Schroeder addresses this worry by arguing that the connection between belief and action insures that the costs of type-1 and type-2 errors will often go well beyond false belief and the absence of true belief, respectively.

[T]he most general sort of cost of type-1 error is simply mistakes that we make, when we act on a belief that turns out to be false. Correlatively, the most general sort of cost of type-2 error derives from the fact that sometimes we simply have to act, and ignorance does not help us. These two sorts of costs—of type-1 and type-2 errors—are clearly practical in nature. They derive from the connection between belief and action. Gratifyingly, in High Stakes the costs of type-1 error are extremely high, and the costs of type-2 error are very low, which on this picture supports the view that there are especially strong reasons to withhold in that case. (p. 277)

So, on Schroeder's view, Hannah's epistemic reasons to withhold with respect to the proposition that the bank will be open in High Stakes outweigh her epistemic reasons to believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes. According to RB, then, Hannah cannot rationally believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes. Since knowledge entails rational belief (Schroeder is assuming), Hannah cannot

know that the bank will be open in High Stakes. And, of course, if Hannah fails to know that the bank will be open in High Stakes, then pragmatism is true, since she knows that the bank will be open in Low Stakes (we are supposing), and the only relevant difference between Low Stakes and High Stakes is the stipulated difference in Hannah's practical interests. This is how Schroeder derives pragmatism from RB.

What should we make of Schroeder's argument? Purists might balk at his claim that reasons to withhold cannot be evidence, or deny that the costs of a type-1 error with respect to the proposition that the bank will be open give Hannah any *epistemic* reason to withhold. The response I favor, however, has purists commenting on the nature of belief. In the quotation above, Schroeder says that the costs of a type-1 error are very high for Hannah in High Stakes, and he says that these costs "derive from the connection between belief and action." What exactly *is* the connection between belief and action? Schroeder does not say, but his argument seems to presuppose the following principle, defended by Dorit Ganson (2008).

- (BC) *S* believes that *p* in *c* only if her credence that *p* in *c* is high enough to insure that there's no difference between what she's actually willing to do and what she would be willing to do if she were certain that *p*. (pp. 451–3)

In High Stakes, Hannah is not willing to go straight home, but she would be willing to go straight home if she were certain that the bank will be open on Saturday. So, according to BC, Hannah does not believe that the bank will be open on Saturday. Suppose that BC is *false*, then. In this case, it's possible for *S* to believe that *p* in *c* without being willing to do what she would be willing to do if she were certain that *p*. If it's possible for *S* to believe that *p* in *c* without being willing to do what she would be willing to do if she were certain that *p* in *c*, however, then why can't Hannah believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes without being willing to go straight home? Yet, if Hannah *can* believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes without being willing to go straight home, then why should we think that, in High Stakes, the costs of a type-1 error with respect to the proposition that the bank will be open are extremely high for Hannah? If BC is false, there seems no reason why Hannah can't believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes and simultaneously take all of the precautions necessary for insuring that she doesn't incur the large fine. But if Hannah can do *this*, then the costs of a type-1 error with respect to the proposition that the bank will be open will be no higher for Hannah in High Stakes than they are for her in Low Stakes. So, unless BC is true, there seems no reason why the costs of a type-1 error with respect to the proposition that the bank will be open should be higher for Hannah in High Stakes than they are in Low Stakes. Thus, Schroeder's argument that the costs of a type-1 error increase as the stakes go up seems to presuppose that BC is true.

Unfortunately, for both Schroeder and Ganson, BC seems false. Again, consider the survey case. As I am answering question 27, I am choosing between *p*, the

proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, and e , the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*. I'm not willing to select p , but, as we've already seen, I would be willing to select p if I were certain that Plato wrote the *Republic*, since in this case I would be indifferent between p and e . At this point someone might object that I *am* certain that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27; it's just that I'm *more* certain that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*, and this is why I am unwilling to select p . But if certainty comes in degrees (as this objection assumes), then BC must say that S believes that p in c only if her credence that p in c is high enough to insure that there is no difference between what she is actually willing to do and what she would be willing to do if she were *more* certain that p . For otherwise, BC provides no reason to think that Hannah does not believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes, and the conjunction of BC and RB provides no reason to think that Hannah cannot rationally believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes.¹² So, on either interpretation of BC, I don't believe that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27. BC therefore runs into exactly the same trouble as Weatherston's BQ. Since Schroeder's argument from RB to pragmatism seems to presuppose BC, it's unclear how RB supports pragmatism. (Notice that similar considerations apply to Roger Clarke's (2013) contextualist theory of belief, according to which belief is credence 1 in context. At least with respect to its bearing on the survey case, there seems no relevant difference between Clarke's view and BC.¹³)

4.4. Taking Stock

KA, KR, KJ, BQ, RB, and BC are widely regarded as the most plausible principles in the pragmatic encroachment literature. If any principle-based argument for pragmatism will succeed, an argument based on one of these principles should succeed. But no argument based on one of these principles can succeed, since these principles are all either susceptible to counterexamples like the survey case or apparently consistent with purism if they are not susceptible to these counterexamples.¹⁴

Perhaps, however, pragmatists can motivate their view with a revision of one of these principles. While these principles are all susceptible to counterexamples like the survey case or apparently consistent with purism if they are not, some modified version of one of these principles might entail pragmatism without mishandling the survey case. If pragmatists thought this, they would be right. After all, the following revision of KA entails pragmatism without mishandling the survey case.

(R1) S knows that p in c only if she can rationally act as if p in c (unless she's taking a survey).

Of course, R1 is silly and no pragmatists would respond to the survey case by accepting anything like R1. But pragmatists might be tempted to respond to the survey case by accepting something like R2, below.

(R2) S knows that p in c only if she can rationally act as if p in c (where S can rationally act as if p in c just in case, for every p -dependent choice

that she faces in c , she can rationally perform *at least one* action in the set of actions with the highest expected utility conditional on p).

Since I can rationally select e on question 27, and since selecting e is one of the actions in the set of actions with the highest expected utility conditional on the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*, R2 does not entail that I lose my knowledge that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27.

The problem with R2, however, is that it's hard to see why anyone should think that it's *true*. To quote again from Fantl and McGrath, the intuitive idea behind KA is that “[i]f you know something, you can *take it for granted, assume it's true, count on it, take it to the bank, and book it*” (2012a, p. 441, their italics). If the set of actions with the highest expected utility conditional on p includes both A and B and I can rationally take p for granted, then I can be indifferent between A and B , and thus rationally perform either of them. Thus, if the set of actions with the highest expected utility conditional on p includes A and B and it would be irrational for me to perform one of them, then I can't take p for granted. But according to R2, I might still know that p , since knowing that p only requires that I can rationally perform *at least one* of the actions in the set of actions with the highest expected utility conditional on p . So, even if R2 is true, I might know something even though I can't take it for granted, assume that it's true, *etc.* Thus, R2 does not preserve the intuitive idea behind KA. But the motivation for R2 is just that it avoids KA's counterexamples. We don't have any other reason to accept R2. So the sole reason for accepting R2 is that it avoids the counterexamples of a principle that it itself leaves undermined. Clearly, this is no reason to think that R2 is true. Of course, it's clear enough why pragmatists might want to accept R2. It gives them a principle that entails pragmatism without mishandling the survey case. But why should anyone else accept R2? Specifically, why should non-pragmatists (purists and agnostics about pragmatism) accept R2? Since there seems no reason to think that R2 is not merely useful to proponents of pragmatism but actually correct, I see no satisfactory answer to this question.¹⁵

Of course, R1 and R2 do not exhaust the principles that pragmatists might adopt in response to the problems with KA, KR, KJ, BQ, RB, and BC. But the point is, pragmatists cannot respond to these problems by simply revising one of their principles or formulating a new one. If they want to rely on any revised or new principle to motivate their view, they must provide sufficient non-question-begging reasons for thinking that the new or revised principle is true. Perhaps pragmatists can do this, but they have not done this yet. At the very least, pragmatists who want to motivate their view with a new principle, or some revision of an old principle, have their work cut out for them.¹⁶

Before turning our attention to case-based arguments for pragmatism, there is one more reply we might consider. In conversation, several people have suggested that pragmatists might respond to the survey case by simply adopting a view that combines knowledge-first elements from Stanley (2005, p. 180) with the decision-theoretic framework sketched in Hawthorne and Stanley (2008, p. 579). According to this view,

- (1) my total knowledge is identical to my total evidence,
- (2) the expected utilities of my options depend on the *evidential* probabilities of the relevant propositions (that is, the probabilities of those propositions conditional on my total evidence),

and

- (3) I can rationally ϕ if ϕ -ing is a member of the set of options with the highest expected utility.

According to (1), the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic* has evidential probability 1, since I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* and the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic* is therefore part of my total evidence. But then, according to (2), the expected utility of selecting p is at least as high as the expected utility of selecting e , and thus, according to (3), I can rationally select p . But the survey case isn't a counterexample to KA if I can rationally select p . So why can't pragmatists respond to the survey case by simply accepting (1) through (3)?

Here it's important to distinguish between (i) the question whether pragmatists might reasonably accept (1) through (3) in response to the survey case and (ii) the question whether the survey case puts significant pressure on *non*-pragmatists to accept (1), (2), and (3). This distinction is important because the survey case appears in an argument designed to show that the most plausible principles in the pragmatic encroachment literature cannot be used in a successful argument for pragmatism. To resist *this* argument, pragmatists must do more than accept (1) through (3) in response to the survey case; they must show why non-pragmatists should follow them. The problem is, the survey case puts no pressure on non-pragmatists to accept each of (1), (2), and (3). First, nothing about the survey case suggests that non-pragmatists should accept (2), and there are good reasons independent of the survey case for rejecting (2). According to one standard view, defended by Ramsey (1926), Jeffrey (1983), and many others, the expected utilities of my options depend on my subjective probabilities or credences in the relevant propositions, not on the evidential probabilities of those propositions. Even if the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic* and the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic* both have evidential probability 1, my credence that Plato wrote the *Republic* is lower than my credence that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*. So, if Ramsey, Jeffrey, and others are right, then (2) is false and the conjunction of (1) and (3) is consistent with the intuitive verdict that I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* even though I cannot rationally select p on question 27.¹⁷ Now, some people think Ramsey and Jeffrey are wrong, and that we should understand expected utilities in terms of more objective probabilities than credences. I myself think something like this. But even if credences are too subjective, there are plausible alternatives to (2). For example, instead of (2), non-pragmatists could reasonably accept the conjunction of (4) and (5), below.

- (4) The expected utility of an action depends on the *epistemic* probabilities of the relevant propositions (where the epistemic probability of p is the probability of p conditional on my total evidence *for and against* p).

- (5) Even if I know that p , and even if p is therefore part of my total evidence, p is not part of my evidence *for or against* p .¹⁸

Whether non-pragmatists opt for (4) and (5), or Ramsey and Jeffrey's view, or some third view, they could easily reject (2) in favor of alternatives that they reasonably regard as more plausible. This means that, even if pragmatists could reasonably accept (1) through (3) in response to the survey case, it is unclear why non-pragmatists should follow them in accepting (2).¹⁹

Second, even if pragmatists can give non-pragmatists some reason to accept (2), isn't the survey case a straightforward counterexample to the conjunction of (1) through (3) anyway? After all, the conjunction of (1) through (3) says exactly the same thing about the survey case as KA: that I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27 only if I can rationally select p on question 27. Even if non-pragmatists find (1) through (3) individually plausible, they could reasonably say that, since (1), (2), and (3) jointly entail that either I don't know that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27 or I can rationally select p on question 27, at least one of (1) through (3) must be false. So, even if pragmatists can reasonably accept (1) through (3) in response to the survey case, this fact does not undermine the arguments in §§3–4, since the survey case puts no pressure on non-pragmatists to follow them. (Similar considerations apply to another suggestion that I have heard several times, according to which pragmatists can respond to the survey case by simply adopting Hannes Leitgeb's (2014) stability theory of belief.²⁰)

The upshot of all of this is that KA, KR, KJ, BQ, RB, BC, and the rest of the principles in the literature are plausibly all either false, consistent with purism, or insufficiently motivated. Given this, however, it's doubtful that pragmatists can employ any of these principles in a successful argument for their view.

5. Case-Based Arguments

If principle-based arguments fail to motivate pragmatism, then pragmatism is unmotivated unless case-based arguments succeed, since principle-based arguments and case-based arguments are all the arguments there are for pragmatism. Unfortunately for pragmatists, without the help of principle-based arguments, case-based arguments seem clearly incapable of motivating pragmatism. (I will move rather quickly in this section, since few pragmatists rely on case-based arguments to motivate their view. Indeed, I only discuss them because philosophers outside of epistemology seem regularly surprised that case-based arguments are not the primary motivation for accepting pragmatism.)

Case-based arguments face at least three serious challenges. First, while some people have the requisite intuition about High Stakes and other cases in the literature, these intuitions arguably track features of the conversations in these cases rather than the relevant person's practical interests, as becomes clear when we compare High Stakes to Revised High Stakes, below.

Revised High Stakes: Hannah is approaching her bank on Friday afternoon, as in High Stakes. Again she notices the long lines, and again she considers

driving straight home and depositing the check Saturday morning. As in High Stakes, Hannah knows that she will incur an enormous fine if she does not deposit her check before noon on Saturday, so she decides that she had better not risk it. But as Hannah pulls into the bank's parking lot, Sarah complains about the long lines and says to Hannah, "Why are you stopping? The bank will be open tomorrow, so you can just deposit your check then, when the lines are much shorter." Hannah replies, "Yeah, I know. But I figure I should play it safe and deposit the check now."

If our intuitions were best explained by Hannah's practical interests, we should have the same response to this case as we have to High Stakes. But we don't. In this case, it's much more intuitive that Hannah knows that the bank will be open than it is in High Stakes. Second, even if we should be worrying about the intuitions of the folk instead of our own intuitions, it's not clear that the folk have pragmatist intuitions. This is a question for experimental philosophy, and several recent studies suggest that the folk do not have pragmatist intuitions.²¹ Third, and finally, even if we should be worrying about the intuitions of the folk and it eventually becomes clear that the folk *do* have pragmatist intuitions, it still won't follow that we should accept pragmatism, since principles like Balance (below) are plausible, and since, if any principle like Balance is true, the mere fact that the folk have pragmatist intuitions would not count decisively in favor of pragmatism.

(Balance) The best theory of knowledge, all things considered, will strike the right balance between the intuitions of the folk, on the one hand, and the subtle theoretical considerations that epistemologists worry about, on the other.

So, everything considered, it looks like case-based arguments for pragmatism do not provide adequate motivation for the view.²²

6. A Challenge for Purism?

But if case-based arguments fail to motivate pragmatism, then what *does* motivate pragmatism? All of the arguments in the literature are either case-based arguments or principle-based arguments, and we have already seen that principle-based arguments do not provide adequate motivation for the view. So what reason do we have for accepting pragmatism?

I see one final consideration that pragmatists might use to motivate their view. It consists in a challenge that pragmatists might pose to purists. Return to High Stakes. If purism is true, then, presumably, Hannah knows that the bank will be open on Saturday, and she also knows that, conditional on the bank's being open on Saturday, going straight home is the best of her options. But purists agree with pragmatists that Hannah cannot rationally go straight home. So, how can this be? How can it be that Hannah cannot rationally go straight home in High Stakes, even though, in High Stakes, she knows that the bank will be open on Saturday, and she also knows that, *conditional on the bank's being open*

on Saturday, going straight home is the best of her options? Purists owe us an explanation. From the perspective of *their own view*, how can it be that Hannah cannot rationally go straight home? Note that pragmatists have no trouble here. If pragmatism is true, Hannah cannot rationally go straight home because, for all she knows, the bank will be *closed* on Saturday. But purists cannot offer this explanation. So what can purists say?²³

I think purists have an answer to this question. In fact, I think they can give roughly the answer that Hannah gives to Sarah in Revised High Stakes. In Revised High Stakes, Sarah tells Hannah that, because the bank will be open on Saturday, Hannah can deposit her check on Saturday morning. Hannah's reply is that, while she knows that the bank will be open on Saturday morning, she had better stop at the bank, since going straight home would be too risky. From the perspective of purism, Hannah's response to Sarah makes perfect sense. If her response to Sarah *does* make sense, however, then the reason that Hannah cannot rationally go straight home in Revised High Stakes is simply that she knows that going straight home would be too risky. This explanation is adequate, if purism is true. Of course, pragmatists would deny that Hannah can simultaneously know that the bank will be open and know that going straight home would be too risky. For if pragmatism is true, Hannah knows that the bank will be open only if going straight home is *not* too risky. But the issue here is not whether Hannah's response to Sarah makes sense from the perspective of pragmatism. Purists would concede that it does not. Rather, the issue here is whether it makes sense from the perspective of purism. And the answer to this question is clear enough. It makes perfect sense from the perspective of purism. The upshot is that, from the perspective of purism, it does not seem mysterious why Hannah cannot rationally go straight home in Revised High Stakes. But the same conclusions apply to High Stakes.

What about pre-theoretically, though? Does Hannah's response to Sarah make sense without the help of an explicit commitment to purism? It does, I think. As Reed (2010) points out, Hannah's response to Sarah seems perfectly natural. It's exactly the sort of comment we might hear in normal, everyday conversation. As Reed would put it, the felicity of Hannah's response to Sarah "shows that our ordinary language allows us to disconnect knowledge and practical rationality" (p. 229). Arguably, then, Hannah's response to Sarah makes sense, not just from the perspective of purism, but pre-theoretically. In fact, because of this, it's arguably *pragmatists* who owe us an explanation. How can pragmatists explain the felicity of Hannah's response to Sarah in Revised High Stakes, given that her response is nonsense if pragmatism is true? This final challenge to purism seems surmountable, and is arguably a source of further problems for pragmatism.

7. Conclusion

In §3 and §4, I argued that no principle-based argument for pragmatism succeeds, and, in §5, I argued that no case-based argument for pragmatism succeeds. Principle-based arguments and case-based arguments are all the arguments there are, however, so it looks like there is no successful argument for pragmatism. In §6,

I considered the possibility of motivating pragmatism by challenging purists to explain why, in High Stakes, Hannah cannot rationally go straight home. As I just argued, purists can meet this challenge, and in such a way that it looks more like a challenge for pragmatism. What motivates pragmatism, then? Since I see no satisfactory answer to this question, I conclude that pragmatism is unmotivated.²⁴

Notes

¹ Paradigm defenses of pragmatism include Fantl and McGrath (2002), Hawthorne (2004), Stanley (2005), Ganson (2008), Fantl and McGrath (2009), Weatherson (2012), Schroeder (2012), and Ross and Schroeder (2014). Paradigm defenses of purism include Neta (2007), Brown (2008), Nagel (2008), DeRose (2009), Fumerton (2010), Lackey (2010), Reed (2010), Brown (2012), Reed (2012), Neta (2012), Cohen (2012), and Reed (2013). People often list Hawthorne and Stanley (2008) as a defense of pragmatism, but, as we will see below, whether it *should* be listed as a defense of pragmatism is more complicated than is often recognized. The labels ‘pragmatism’ and ‘purism’ come from Fantl and McGrath (2009). Though ‘pragmatism’ is perhaps misleading (since it is the standard name for the view associated with Peirce, James, and Dewey), it seems clearly preferable to the more popular labels ‘subject-sensitive invariantism’ and ‘interest-relative invariantism,’ since these labels wed the epistemological thesis that knowledge depends at least in part on our practical interests to the linguistic thesis that ‘knows’ is not a context-sensitive word. As Fantl and McGrath note, we should keep these theses apart (at least in our terminology), since the thesis that knowledge depends at least in part on our practical interests is consistent with the thesis that ‘knows’ *is* a context-sensitive word.

² Cf. DeRose (1992, p. 913) and Stanley (2005, pp. 3–4).

³ This is how Hawthorne and Stanley (2008) support their Knowledge-Reason Principle, which is often assumed to entail pragmatism.

⁴ This is the standard characterization of truth-relevance, and it comes initially from Stanley (2005, p. 1). Stanley’s own term is ‘truth conducive factors.’ Other common terms include ‘truth related factors,’ ‘truth connected factors,’ ‘truth directed factors,’ and even ‘epistemically relevant factors.’ I owe the term ‘truth-relevant factors’ to DeRose (2009, p. 25).

⁵ See, for example, Stanley (2005, pp. 1–4) and DeRose (2009, pp. 189–93). An interesting interpretive question about Stanley (2005) arises in this context. If Hannah’s practical interests affect whether she knows that the bank will open, as Stanley claims, then they affect the probability that the bank will be open conditional on Hannah’s total knowledge. But this means that, if $K = E$, then Hannah’s practical interests also affect the *evidential probability* that the bank will be open (that is, the probability that the bank will be open conditional on Hannah’s total evidence). So how could Hannah’s practical interests fail to be truth-relevant if pragmatism is true and $K = E$, and how should we square Stanley’s claim on page 2 that practical interests are truth-*irrelevant* with his suggestions on pages 180–1 that $K = E$?

⁶ See, for example, Fantl and McGrath (2002, pp. 76–8), Fantl and McGrath (2007, p. 559), and Ross and Schroeder (2014, p. 261).

⁷ Fantl and McGrath make this same point (2002, fn. 7).

⁸ Cf. Kasaki (2014).

⁹ Because Link is equivalent to the proposition that, if S ’s choice is p -dependent and it is appropriate for S to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting in c , then S can rationally act as if p in c , Link’s negation is equivalent to the proposition that, possibly, (a) S ’s choice is p -dependent, (b) it is appropriate for S to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting in c , and yet (c) S *cannot* rationally act as if p in c . If (a), (b) and (c) are jointly possible, then (b) and (c) are jointly possible.

¹⁰ Weatherson’s (2012) argument for pragmatism assumes that knowledge entails belief, which Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel (2013), and Murray, Sytsma and Livengood (2013), have recently called into question. I will assume with Weatherson that knowledge does entail belief. If I am mistaken in this assumption, my mistake will only cause further problems for Weatherson’s arguments for pragmatism.

¹¹ Presumably, Weatherson would say that this is *not* implausible, and that, in fact, this is exactly the right result. To unpack the consequences of his view, Weatherson has us consider a person named ‘Charlie’ who is trying to figure out the exact probability of some proposition p . According to

Weatherson, the mere fact that Charlie is trying to figure out the exact probability of p entails that “unless $\Pr(p) = 1$, Charlie will give a different answer to the questions *How probable is p?* and *Given p, how probable is p?* So unless Charlie holds that $\Pr(p)$ is 1, she won’t count as believing that p ” (p. 87). Everything Weatherson says here about Charlie should apply *mutatis mutandis* to me as I answer question 27.

¹²Ganson clearly intends a reading of BC on which BC entails that Hannah does not believe that the bank will be open in High Stakes. Her comments about Fantl and McGrath’s high stakes train case apply *mutatis mutandis* to Hannah in High Stakes.

¹³On Clarke’s view, any context in which the possibility that $\neg p$ is salient will be a context in which my credence that p is lower than 1 and in which I therefore do not believe that p . Since I select e on question 27 because I realize that e is true even in worlds where Plato did not write the *Republic*, Clarke’s view entails that I do not believe that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27.

¹⁴Of course, there are problems with these principles in addition to the dilemma I have forwarded against them here. Most of these problems afflict some but not all of these principles, however. Part of the interest of the dilemma I forward in this paper is that it threatens *all* of the principles in the pragmatic encroachment literature, including those that I have not mentioned in this section.

¹⁵Exactly the same problem afflicts the revision of KJ that Fantl and McGrath (2012b) defend in response to the counterexample forwarded by Cohen (2012). According to Cohen, KJ is false since we get counterexamples from cases where S knows that p , where she would be justified in φ -ing (for some value of ‘ φ ’) if she could be literally certain that p , but where she is *not* justified in φ -ing due in part to weaknesses in her epistemic position with respect to propositions *other than p* (p. 450). Fantl and McGrath agree that Cohen has produced counterexamples to KJ (2012b, p. 475), so they modify their definition of ‘warranted enough’ to accommodate the counterexamples. To do this, they discuss a scenario where your headlights will not illuminate and you are wondering whether the bulbs are responsible (p. 476). The bulbs might be *fully* responsible or just *partially* responsible. To see whether they are fully responsible, you cannot simply replace the bulbs and see whether the headlights work. This is because, in a case where defects in the bulbs and defects in the battery *combine* to prevent the lights from working, replacing the bulbs might fix the lights even though the bulbs are only partially responsible. To see whether the bulbs are fully responsible, you must ask whether the lights would work if the bulbs were the same *and everything else in your car were ideal*. According to Fantl and McGrath, instead of showing that KJ is false, Cohen’s counterexamples simply show that, on the correct way to think about sufficient warrant, the claim that p is warranted enough to justify S in φ -ing is analogous to the claim that the bulbs are not fully responsible for the lights not working (p. 475–6). Thus, instead of abandoning KJ, Fantl and McGrath revise it as follows:

(KJ’) For every value of ‘ φ ,’ S knows that p in c only if, on the assumption that everything else relevant to whether p justifies S in φ -ing in c is ideal, but holding fixed her epistemic position with respect to p and her practical situation in c , p justifies her in φ -ing. (p. 477)

KJ’ survives Cohen’s counterexamples, but just like R1 and R2, it’s inconsistent with the core idea that, if you know something, you can take it for granted, assume that it’s true, count on it, *etc.* Granted, to see whether the bulbs are fully responsible for the broken headlights, you must ask whether the lights would work if the bulbs were the same and everything else in your car were ideal. But how does this suggest that, in response to Cohen’s counterexample, Fantl and McGrath can simply swap out KJ for KJ’? Why should anyone think that KJ’ is actually *true*? Like R1 and R2, KJ’ will strike many people as unacceptably *ad hoc*. What’s worse, KJ’ also mishandles the survey case. Even though I know that Plato wrote the *Republic* as I answer question 27, this proposition doesn’t justify me in selecting p on question 27. But this isn’t because something relevant to whether this proposition justifies me in selecting p on question 27 isn’t ideal. Quite the opposite. It’s because something relevant to whether this proposition justifies me in selecting p on question 27 *is* ideal. It’s because my epistemic position with respect to the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic* is ideal. So apparently, KJ’ isn’t just *ad hoc*; it’s also false.

¹⁶Note also that suitable revisions of these principles may result in principles that no longer entail pragmatism. For example, by revising KA or KJ, we might easily arrive at something like

Dustin Locke's practical certainty principle (2015, p. 16), which, as Locke points out, does not entail pragmatism.

¹⁷ Williamson seems to accept something like the conjunction of (1), (3), and the Ramsey/Jeffrey understanding of expected utility. According to Williamson (2000, pp. 213–4), “[w]e should question the association between evidential probability 1 and absolute certainty. For subjective Bayesians, probability 1 is the highest possible degree of belief, which presumably is absolute certainty. If one's credence in p is 1, one should be willing to accept a bet on which one gains a penny if p is true and is tortured horribly to death if p is false. Few propositions pass that test. Surely complex logical truths do not, even though the probability axioms assign them probability 1. But since evidential probabilities are not actual or counterfactual credences, why should evidential probability 1 entail absolute certainty?”

¹⁸ Fantl and McGrath (2009, p. 225) make exactly this point in response to the objection that their view entails infallibilism.

¹⁹ Of course, (1) is also controversial, and Rubin (2015) provides nice arguments against the view we get from (1) through (3) if we add that S 's credence in p is epistemically rational iff her credence in p equals the evidential probability of p .

²⁰ There are at least three problems with this suggestion. First, many non-pragmatists find multi-premise closure implausible, and these people will have a hard time seeing what motivates Leitgeb's view. Second, Leitgeb's view runs into powerful objections developed by Julia Staffel (forthcoming), as well as some of the objections developed by Ross and Schroeder (2014) in response to Weatherston's theory of belief. According to what I think is the most persuasive of these objections—developed by Staffel—Leitgeb's view entails that I can take myself out of position to rationally believe that I had an orange for breakfast (for example) by simply considering whether a coin that I am about to toss will land heads, even if I know that the outcome of the toss is completely irrelevant to what I had for breakfast (pp. 11–2). Third, the survey case appears to be a counterexample to Leitgeb's theory of belief. According to Leitgeb, the threshold for belief changes from context to context, depending on the amount of risk a person is willing to take in a context (pp. 149–50). In a context where a person isn't willing to take any risk at all, the threshold for belief will be credence 1. This is important because, as I answer question 27, I'm not willing to take any risk at all, since it's obvious that I don't need to. (I can select the proposition that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*, after all, so there's no reason to take even the slightest risk by selecting the proposition that Plato wrote the *Republic*.) But my credence that Plato wrote the *Republic* is lower than 1, since it's lower than my credence that either $1 = 1$ or Plato wrote the *Republic*. The upshot is that, even if we wave the first two worries, the survey case is apparently a counterexample to Leitgeb's view.

²¹ See, for example, Buckwalter (2010), May, Sinnott-Armstrong, Hull, and Zimmerman (2010), Feltz and Zarpentine (2010), Schaffer and Knobe (2012), Phelan (2014), and Buckwalter and Schaffer (2015).

²² Stanley (2005) contains what is arguably the best case-based argument for pragmatism, but even according to Stanley, the main argument for pragmatism is not a case-based argument. Rather, according to Stanley, the primary motivation for accepting pragmatism is that it “allows one to preserve the Reason-Knowledge Principle without embracing skepticism” (Sripada and Stanley 2012, p. 23). So, even by Stanley's lights, it is apparently a mistake for pragmatists to rely primarily on case-based arguments.

²³ Brown (2013, p. 246) also notes the possibility of motivating pragmatism this way.

²⁴ My sincere thanks to Matt Benton, Jeremy Fantl, Alvin Goldman, Jennifer Lackey, Matt McGrath, Lisa Miracchi, Ted Poston, Ernie Sosa, Jason Stanley, Kurt Sylvan, and especially Baron Reed for helpful comments on material in this paper and illuminating conversation about pragmatic encroachment.

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