Robbery, Pragmatic Encroachment, and the Knowledge Norm of Action

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RESUMEN

Hay razones para creer que existe una tensión entre el argumento de Timothy Williamson a favor de la norma epistémica de la acción y su explicación del conocimiento como un estado mental no luminoso. Incluso el propio caso del robo propuesto por Williamson, que él usa para apoyar las normas de conocimiento, solo puede ser explicado por medio del conocimiento luminoso. Esto plantea la cuestión de si se puede complementar la visión de Williamson para salvar su norma epistémica de la acción y, en ese caso, de cómo debería hacerse. En este artículo se argumenta que la injerencia pragmática puede resolver la aparente tensión en el punto de vista de Williamson, especialmente tal como surge en los casos de gran transcendencia, y esto debería contar como una razón (claramente no decisiva) para reconocer la injerencia pragmática como un aspecto del conocimiento. Mientras que Williamson no añadiría la injerencia pragmática a su versión de la epistemología del conocimiento primero, la revisión que propongo es la menos radical que resolvería la tensión y, si esto es así, debería ser adoptada por los proponentes del conocimiento primero.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *epistemología; filosofía de la acción; epistemología del conocimiento primero; Timothy Williamson; norma epistémica de la acción; injerencia pragmática.*

ABSTRACT

There is reason to believe that there is a tension between Timothy Williamson's argument for the knowledge norm of action and his account of knowledge as a non-luminous mental state. Even Williamson's own robbery case, which he uses to support knowledge norms, may only be explained by luminous knowledge. This raises the question of whether and how one should supplement the Williamsonian picture to salvage his knowledge norm of action. This work argues that pragmatic encroachment can resolve the apparent tension in Williamson's view, especially as it arises in high stakes cases, and this should count as a (clearly non-dispositive) reason to recognize pragmatic encroachment as an aspect of knowledge. While Williamson would not add pragmatic encroachment to his version of knowledge-first epistemology, my proposed revision is the least radical one that will resolve the tension and so should be adopted by knowledge-first proponents.

KEYWORDS: *Epistemology; Philosophy of Action; Knowledge-First Epistemology; Timothy Williamson; Knowledge Norm of Action; Pragmatic Encroachment.*

One of the salutary features of Timothy Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology, which he most thoroughly defends in *Knowledge and Its Limits* (2000), is its explanation and defense of knowledge norms for assertion and action. Williamsonian knowledge, in other words, is partly

justified by its ability to explain why we do and should speak and act in certain ways. His defense of knowledge norms is, however, the subject of several critiques. The line of criticism that I will address in this piece argues that Williamson's argument for the knowledge norm of action is in tension with his account of knowledge as a non-luminous mental state.

In short, this criticism holds that, contra Williamson, knowledge must be iterable to (together with our desires) explain and justify why one should act differently than someone with mere justified true belief in a variety of cases, including Williamson's own 'robbery case'. The 'KK Thesis', which requires knowledge to iterable such that you only know something when you know that you know it, is flatly inconsistent with Williamson's text.[1] Williamson appears to be forced in the position of amending (or, worse, abandoning) the knowledge norm of action or accepting KK. Accepting KK would too radically alter Williamson's view. This tension raises the question of how to salvage a similar knowledge norm of action if one is amenable to the knowledge-first program.

In this work, I will argue that pragmatic encroachment provides a solution to the apparent tension in Williamson's view.[2] Its fit with and solution of a tension in a leading view in modern epistemology should serve as further (non-dispositive) evidence for the plausibility of pragmatic encroachment. First, I provide basic information about Williamson's view. Next, I rehearse the argument that a tension exists in Williamson's view. The argument is structurally similar to David Sosa's (2009) argument against the knowledge norm of assertion, but also highlights an action-specific internal tension in Williamson's project evident in his robbery case. Then, I canvass possible solutions to the tension and identify weaknesses with solutions that do not acknowledge pragmatic encroachment. Next, I argue that pragmatic encroachment best resolves the issue in Williamson's robbery case and other important (predominantly high stakes) cases where KK seems plausible, partly by arguing that alternatives require more radical departures from his view. Finally, I identify lingering concerns and provide a tentative response to them.

If I succeed in making my case that the tension between Williamson's argument against luminosity and his argument for the explanatory value of knowledge as a norm of action can best be resolved through the supplementation of his view to recognize pragmatic encroachment, I will help complete a Williamsonian picture of the knowledge norm of action. I will also provide an argument for pragmatic encroachment: pragmatic encroachment helps solves a theoretical problem at the center of one of the leading programs in contemporary epistemology. While Williamson

would resist the inclusion of pragmatic encroachment in his knowledge-first epistemology, pragmatic encroachment-recognition is the least radical revision to Williamson's picture that resolves the tension above. Despite Williamson's objections, then, knowledge-first epistemology should be supplemented to recognize that practical facts about stakes help determine the relationship between knowledge and action. Pragmatic encroachment should be an important element of Williamsonian knowledge-based explanations of action.

I. WILLIAMSON'S ARGUMENT FOR THE KNOWLEDGE NORM OF ACTION

The question in this text is, again, how to resolve an apparent tension between Williamson's arguments for knowledge as a non-analyzable and non-luminous mental state and the knowledge norm of action respectively. While I assume familiarity with Williamson's larger project here, it is important to provide some preliminary details for those new to the debate. Doing so should make the claimed tension clearer. This section thus briefly explains the basic features of Williamson's account of knowledge and argument for the knowledge norm of action. The next section will explain how parts thereof present a tension I seek to resolve.

While knowledge-first epistemology famously holds that knowledge is not factorizable (viz., cannot be divided into constituent parts such as 'justification', 'truth' and 'belief'), knowledge must have four primary features in Williamson.[3] Per Williamson, knowledge is (i) a mental state that is (ii) factive and (iii) non-analyzable [Williamson (2000), p. 47]. It is also (iv) non-luminous where a mental state is luminous if and only if "[f]or every case $\propto$, if in $\propto$ C obtains, then in $\propto$ one is in a position to know that C obtains" [*Ibid.* p. 44]. Williamson accordingly denies "(KK) For any pertinent proposition p, if [a person] knows p then he knows that he knows p" [*Ibid.* p. 113]. Knowledge thus does not need to be iterable: one does need to know that one knows C to know C.

Knowledge-first epistemology's commitment to the knowledge norm of action is also taken to be a constitutive element of the view.[4] While one can subscribe to a version of knowledge-first epistemology without subscribing to the knowledge norm of action, the knowledge norm of action is central to Williamson's version of knowledge-first epistemology and serves as one of the key motivating forces for subscribing to any knowledge-first view. The knowledge norm of action holds that

"[o]ne ought to treat P as a reason for acting only if one knows that P"
[McGlynn (2014), p. 132, paraphrasing Hawthorne & Stanley (2008)].[5]
Williamson famously does not defend the knowledge norm of action in
detail. He instead presents a sustained argument for a knowledge norm
of assertion [Williamson (2000), Chapter 11] and leaves it open to others
to recognize how his arguments can be used to make an analogous case
for a knowledge norm of action.[6] Williamson's most direct argument for
the knowledge norm of action is case-based. He presents a robber
searching for a diamond in a residence and argues that the robber should
and will stay in the house longer if he has knowledge than he would if he
merely had a justified true belief:

> the probability of his ransacking the house all night, conditional on his
> having entered it believing that there was a diamond in it, is lower than the
> probability if his ransacking it all night, conditional on his having entered
> it knowing that there was a diamond in it [*Ibid.* p. 62].

This robbery case, Williamson claims, is just one of many cases where
people with knowledge do and should act differently than those with
mere justified true belief. There are many cases where one cannot substi-
tute true belief for knowledge without suffering from explanatory loss
[*Ibid.*]. This is because different epistemic states warrant different actions
(even where desires, the non-epistemic requirements for actions, remain
constant).

II. THE CHALLENGE

Williamson's version of the knowledge norm of action is subject to a
line of criticism that is similar to one of the more striking critiques of the
knowledge norm of assertion. Sosa's critique of the knowledge norm of
assertion demonstrates that the knowledge norm of assertion does not
generalize to a number of cases unless we "accept additional controversial
principles" and/or adopt KK in particular [Sosa (2009), pp. 270-271]. Sosa
understands that the primary contribution of Williamson's knowledge
norm of assertion is that it explains the oddity of asserting "*P* but I don't
know that *P*": *P* in this case "cannot be known" and only the assertion of
that which one knows is felicitous [*Ibid.* p. 270]. Yet this approach cannot
account for the oddness of "*P* but I don't know whether I know that *P*"
without postulating the KK principle [*Ibid.*]. So, Williamsonian knowledge

cannot ground a plausible knowledge norm of action. Sosa further argues that Williamson's norm of action may require iteration that leads to KK, which Sosa and Williamson deny. Per Sosa, the view "will have to be strengthened implausibly, to require, for every level, knowledge that you know…that you know that *P*" [*Ibid.* p. 271]. The knowledge norm of assertion only accounts for common examples of similarly odd assertions with epistemic content when the knowledge that can play this normative role is *frequently* iterated in a way that may require KKK. These controversial principles and KK are both unpalatable to Sosa, who says "we should consider giving up on the presupposition that there is a particular norm distinctive of assertion as such" [*Ibid.*]. But this need not be the only response to the tension.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given that Williamson's argument for the knowledge norm of action is largely an analogy to his argument for the knowledge norm of assertion, an argument that is structurally similar to Sosa's case also applies to (at least Williamson's version of) the knowledge norm of action. Just as Sosa shows that knowledge needs to be iterative to justify assertion across a large number of cases, knowledge needs to be iterative to justify action across a large number of cases.[7] Williamson's account requires that non-iterable knowledge in particular can serve as a norm for action. Denial of KK is central to Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology. Yet non-luminous 'knowledge' cannot be a norm for action in many circumstances. Non-iterative knowledge no more justifies action than justified true belief in many cases. In fact, I submit, Williamson's own robbery case presents a challenge to Williamson's claim that knowledge could be non-luminous *and* serve as the norm for action.

While the basics of my argument for the tension between non-luminosity and the norm for action appear elsewhere, it is necessary to rehearse the basics of this view here to understand my argument. Once one sees that the tension forces Williamson to either (a) give up on anti-luminosity or the norm for action or (b) supplement Williamson's picture with pragmatic encroachment, one should see that (b) is the less radical and more defensible change to the Williamsonian picture, as I argue below. As I summarize the position elsewhere, in many cases, including Williamson's own robber case,

> [o]nly those acting on the basis of an iterated knowledge-desire pair will act differently than those acting on the basis of a belief-desire pair. One can plausibly argue that the robber needs to know that he knows that there is a diamond in the house for him to stay in the house any longer

than an individual with a justified true belief. If one does not know that one knows that there is a diamond in the house, one may be acting on the basis of something functionally equivalent to a justified true belief. Lack of knowledge about one's epistemic states will forestall one's acting on the basis of reasons that epistemic state may give him or her. Whether these people do act differently is a task for experimental philosophers; those who posit an uniterable knowledge norm of action face the onus of proving that uniterable knowledge motivates people in different ways than belief. If the person with knowledge only stays in the house for the same amount of time as the person with a justified true belief, then only iterated knowledge plays the explanatory role in action that helps explain why there is a knowledge norm of action [Da Silva (2014), p. 329].

To put the point more succinctly, there exists a significant number of cases where knowledge must be iterative to explain why people do and should act differently on the basis of knowledge than justified true belief. While knowledge does not always need to be iterable or iterative to serve this explanatory function that is distinctive of the case for a knowledge norm of belief, the existence of this significant number of cases where iteration is necessary presents a serious tension in Williamson: these cases undermine the case for the knowledge norm of action or the case for anti-luminosity. One may be forced to choose between them to plausibly explain the cases. Indeed, the robber in Williamson's own distinctive knowledge norm of assertion would and should only act differently from the robber with a mere justified true belief in the location of the diamond if he knew that he knew that there was a diamond in the house. The fact that Williamson's own case raises the tension between his argument for the knowledge norm of action and his denial of KK is suggestive of a larger problem with Williamson's view.

The argument for a tension between Williamson's knowledge norm of action and Williamson's anti-luminosity is structurally similar to Sosa's argument against the knowledge norm of assertion, but it differs in two important ways. First, it suggests that Williamson's own example undermines his view. It thus demonstrates a problem internal to Williamson's project. Sosa focuses on a more general problem and creates new cases as counterexamples. The identification of an internal tension in Williamson's view is new. Second, my argument is not supposed to be an argument against the adoption of knowledge norms. I hope to resolve the tension I present. The internal problem I identify is suggestive of a more general problem with the knowledge norm of action, but I do not pursue that line of reasoning here. In the following, I explain how one can resolve

the internal tension in the case of the robber in the house. The best solution of that case will generalize for other cases as the benefits of my resolution of the tension in that case will also apply in other cases where Williamson's knowledge norm of action seems plausible. As I argue below, it is particularly valuable in the high stakes where the temptation to say that one must adopt KK as part of the knowledge norm of action is highest. I do not, of course, argue that a version of KK that recognizes pragmatic encroachment best resolves the identified tension in Williamson's view. Williamson cannot adopt KK in *any* form without fundamentally altering his view and a pragmatic encroachment-based version of KK is especially implausible as it seems to require knowledge of stakes in order to act in all cases, which is too strong in most cases. Rather, I will argue that a knowledge norm of action that makes more evidence necessary to act as stakes raise is both plausible and a less radical departure from the general Williamsonian picture than alternative possibilities.

III. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

If knowledge cannot play its explanatory and normative role in action in the absence of its constitutive features, (i)-(iv) above, then knowledge as Williamson understands it cannot serve as the norm for action in the way that Williamson proposes. In this text, I seek to examine how one can resolve the apparent tension in Williamson's view if the argument for tension in the last section succeeds. I am not as skeptical as Sosa about the possibility of distinctive norms of assertion or action in general or the knowledge norm of action in particular. For the purposes of this work, then, grant that, at least for a large number of cases, people (justifiably) act differently with iterable knowledge than people with justified true beliefs, but it is unclear whether people with non-iterable knowledge also act differently than those with justified true beliefs. If this is true (as I argue in Da Silva (2014)), the presence of non-iterable knowledge may not help explain or justify action in the way we would expect a knowledge norm of action to do. This would produce the tension between Williamson's knowledge norm of action and his commitment to the non-luminosity of knowledge. I then ask: What should one do in the face of this tension?

The plausibility of my resolution to this tension, the adoption of pragmatic encroachment, is made clear by first focusing on the deficiencies of alternative approaches. One could, of course, simply abandon ei-

ther knowledge-first epistemology or the knowledge norm of action. As
noted already, Sosa takes this tack. Aidan McGlynn then surveys the
knowledge-first literature and suggests that the best response to other
problems with the knowledge norm of assertion: one should either adopt
a less demanding standard, such as a justified belief standard, or "hold
that the epistemic demands on when one can treat a proposition as a rea-
son for action vary depending on the circumstances, perhaps requiring
knowledge under certain – but not all – conditions" [McGlynn (2014),
pp. 134-135].[8] The former move denies the knowledge norm of action.
That is unpalatable. The latter suggests it only applies under certain cir-
cumstances. This latter move may thereby offer a solution to the tension
above: non-luminous knowledge is only a norm for certain actions. Yet it
is unsatisfying if it makes Williamson's paradigm knowledge norm of ac-
tion case an example of where the conditions for knowledge do not apply.
Further, if, as I contend, there are many cases where luminosity would be
required, the circumstances in which the knowledge norm of action would
not apply in the latter approach may be sufficiently great as to raise doubts
about whether it can generate general principles we expect to arise for epis-
temic norms.

   If one is still tempted by a Williamson-inspired knowledge-first epis-
temology and/or a Williamsonian knowledge norm of action, one should
resolve the apparent tension in his view in a manner that allows the
knowledge norm of action to apply generally, as he intended it, or at the
very least allows it to apply to his paradigm case. This resolution has not
been attempted thus far. I will attempt it. There are two obvious candi-
date resolutions: (1) adopt KK or (2) add another component to the Wil-
liamsonian project to explain the differences in actions across the cases.
The following two paragraphs explain why the first option is unpalatable.
The remainder of this work then goes on to explain how best to ap-
proach the second option. Rather than concede defeat on the possibility of
a knowledge norm of action or adopt KK (or otherwise recognize lumi-
nosity), I will argue that Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology should
recognize pragmatic encroachment. This version of Option (2) does not
abandon Williamson's larger project and still defends the knowledge
norm of action by eliminating the tension above.

   The problem with Option (1), the adoption of KK, stems both
from facts about what it means to be a Williamsonian and facts about
knowledge as an explanatory norm for action. First, while Option (1)
continues to gain some traction in the literature for independent reasons
[e.g., Greco (2014)] and scholars question the strength of Williamson's ar-

gument against KK [e.g., Stalnaker (2015)], adding KK to the knowledge-first project would be a radical revision of Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology. Indeed, it is hard to consider any Option (1) position Williamsonian given how vehemently Williamson opposes KK in *Knowledge and its Limits* and elsewhere. Such a move is thus unavailable to those who are tempted by the Williamsonian picture of either knowledge simpliciter or knowledge as a norm for action.

One could subscribe to the knowledge norm of action without being a Williamsonian,[9] but if one then decides to adopt Option (1), an even more pressing concern remains. In short, second, it is not clear that even knowing that you know suffices to explain one's rational action in several cases. John Hawthorne and Jason Stanley's work on high stakes makes this second concern clear. To simplify their argument, Williamsonian knowledge gives one probability 1 concerning the truth of a given proposition [Hawthorne & Stanley (2008), p. 574n3]. To know p is thus to be able to act on p. We can, however, know banal things and it is not clear that we do or can justifiably act on them all. High stakes bets make this problem particularly acute. Williamson seems to suggest knowing that you will win a given bet provides grounds for acting on it. This is implausible in high stakes bet cases. You may 'know' that you will win, but if the stakes are sufficiently high, it is unlikely that you are warranted in acting on that knowledge. Even knowing that you know will not suffice to justify your taking on such large risks (particularly if they could impact others). Some form of Option (2) thus appears necessary to solve the tension in Williamson's view. A form that accounts for high stakes cases, including high stakes bets, would be particularly valuable. A form that includes pragmatic encroachment is best able to do so.

IV. High Stakes and the Difficulties of a Fully Williamsonian Approach to Option (2)

Option 2, in any of its forms, does not, of course, suggest that one must add something to knowledge to address this concern. It merely suggests that one should add something to Williamson's picture. Given the apparently primitive and unanalyzable nature of knowledge, anything added to it would seem to be redundant even if it could be added to knowledge; any position that rests on an additive theory of knowledge runs risks turning into a non-Williamsonian approach. If one wishes to maintain consistency with the spirit of Williamson's knowledge-first

view, one cannot add new components to knowledge. At most, one can suggest that knowledge conditions differ slightly than Williamson would have us believe. Recognition that pragmatic factors can encroach on knowledge does not change the structure of Williamsonian knowledge, so much as change its relationship to facts about the world. Where it can also explain differences in action in high stakes cases, it is the best candidate for fulfilling Option (2). If this is true, then pragmatic encroachment, as developed by e.g., Williamson supporters Hawthorne and Stanley, can resolve the tension above. This should count in favor of recognizing pragmatic encroachment in an account of knowledge.

Before accepting pragmatic encroachment as the best specification of Option (2), however, I should test alternative candidates. Given space limitations, I can only cover one whose defects are suggestive of problems with other views here. I propose that the alternative I will address cannot account for the problem of high stakes and my suggested supplement, pragmatic encroachment, may be necessary to deal with the problem of high stakes regardless of whether one subscribes to a knowledge-first epistemology. If this is so, then pragmatic encroachment is independently necessary and other versions of (2) will need a pragmatic encroachment supplement. These facts count against the other versions.

To make the strongest case possible for Williamson's followers, I focus here on an alternative, non-pragmatic encroachment-adopting version of Option (2) that may not even result in the addition of anything to his system. This potential solution to the tension above suggests that a strengthening of an existing component, knowledge's status as a prime condition, suffices. This approach attempts to use another feature of Williamsonian knowledge to explain why knowledge causes people to act differently than those with other mental states (and can thus serve as the norm for action). Williamson demonstrates how knowledge's status as a prime condition provides strong explanatory value and suggests that the value of prime conditions mirrors those of other broad conditions [Williamson (2000), p. 75]. Per Williamson, a condition is prime "if and only if it is not composite" where a condition is composite "if and only if it is the conjunction of a narrow [viz., internal] condition…and some environmental [viz., external] condition" [*Ibid.* p. 66].[10] Williamson says such conditions are not as easily defeated and this is relevant to our explanation of action [*Ibid.* pp. 78-80, 86-87]. When the internal and external components of our beliefs are so closely related, our beliefs will persist in the absence of changes to both components. Where the external component is factive, our internal component should be sensitive only to

fact-based evidence. Persistence should only falter in the face of new evidence. This is not true of justified true belief.

A Williamsonian who is reluctant to adopt KK or a version of Option (2) committed to e.g., pragmatic encroachment can use this primeness to, at the very least, explain the case motivating my claimed internal tension in Williamson. S/he can claim that this primeness can explain persistent action in the case of the robber who stays in a house longer when he knows that there is a diamond in the house than he would have stayed if he merely had a justified true belief in its presence [*Ibid.* p. 62]. The robber does not give up on his belief as early and this explains his staying in the house longer. Williamson claims that individuals not only give up on their plans based on justified true beliefs earlier than their plans based on knowledge, they also give up on their justified true beliefs much earlier than they give up on their knowledge. If this story is correct, then knowledge's status as a prime condition may explain why the robber is more persistent when he has knowledge. Whether this persistence continues without iteration is questionable, but it is possible. The Williamsonian can then claim that the response generalizes, so adopting a version of Option (2) does not even need to be strictly additive. In light of this possibility, one may be tempted to emphasize the primeness of knowledge to explain why those with (even uniterable) knowledge act differently than those with justified true beliefs. The primeness explanation is the least radical version of Option (2) available and the one most charitable to Williamson's project. Indeed, one may question whether it is even a version of Option (2) since it reemphasizes primeness in his view, rather than adding something to it.

Unfortunately, even if primeness helps with the robbery case, which is questionable, the primeness of knowledge may not fully account for an explanation of all our actions. Williamson claims that one can know a lot of things "without being prepared to bet [one's] house on them" [*Ibid.*, p. 86]. Yet his approach does not seem to account for why we do and should act the way we do in the face of high stakes bets. Recall Hawthorne and Stanley's case of betting a penny against the lives of ten children [Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), p. 588].[11] Hawthorne and Stanley note that subjective certainty about a fact where one is not in a position to know is insufficient to justify taking the bet. I believe this is correct and add that most people would not take the bet. This common response cannot be explained on the basis of standard Williamsonian knowledge; that knowledge seems to explain the opposite action. Something else must explain this action and why it remains normatively acceptable.

Williamson suggests one should be able to explain and justify one's actions on the basis of knowledge. This raises a question: How can Williamson explain that what you should do and what people actually do seem to change as stakes get higher? Explanation of this fact is necessary for establishing the explanatory value of knowledge as a norm for action. Without an account of high stakes cases, the value of knowledge-first epistemology for our explanation and norm of action is questionable. Primeness will not explain such cases. Prime knowledge seems to indicate a match between the fact that you will win and your internal recognition of this fact. Together, the matching features seem to suggest it is acceptable to accept the bet above. You are not wrong in the 'good case' presented. Insofar as you really know, you will not be wrong in nearby 'bad' cases either. Accepting the bet nonetheless appears wrongful given the high stakes involved. This is particularly true when you do not know that you know that you will win the one cent lottery. It remains true even after iteration. Accepting the bet is also unlikely. Both normatively and descriptively, the fact that one has knowledge about an outcome appears insufficient to account for the action of taking a high stakes bet. Ultimately, one must recognize that the external facts we need to 'match' with our internal views include practical facts about stakes. This requires acceptance of pragmatic encroachment Williamson would not license. As I will now explain, this is not a problem for Williamson's followers as so-supplementing Williamson's view helps avoid the tension above.

V. PRAGMATIC ENCROACHMENT: THE BEST VERSION OF OPTION (2)

Pragmatic encroachment appears to be necessary to solve the issues facing high stakes cases. Fortunately for the knowledge-first program in general (if not for Williamson himself), treating pragmatic encroachment as a supplement in an Option (2) approach not only solves the problem of high stakes. It can also help resolve the tension between the non-luminosity of knowledge and the knowledge norm of action by explaining why iterable or iterated knowledge may be required for one to act differently than those with mere justified true beliefs in some cases, but uniterated or even uniterable knowledge may be enough for people to justifiably act differently than those with justified true beliefs in other cases. Where pragmatic encroachment allows epistemic norms to vary across contexts, it can allow different types of knowledge to serve as norms for action across contexts. Where this move particularly explains a

class of actions Williamson's project has difficulty explaining without running afoul of the general non-Williamsonian knowledge-first program, recognition of pragmatic encroachment in the Williamsonian project should appeal to those who are generally sympathetic to his view, but who recognize the tension above.

The benefits of using pragmatic encroachment as a specification of Option (2) are numerous. At the most basic level, pragmatic encroachment explains why it seems like luminous knowledge is required in the robbery case and similar cases. In short, the stakes are sufficiently high in these cases that the knowledge needed to act in an epistemically responsible manner is functionally equivalent to luminous knowledge. In the robbery case, the high stakes include the possibility of jail time for breaking and entering and at least attempted burglary. The risk of censure and sanction in the robbery case is high and the probability thereof gets higher as time passes. The evidence required to justify assuming such risk must be great to be pragmatically appropriate given the circumstances and the evidence set may even need to include something akin to knowledge of one's knowledge if the risk of censure and sanction is sufficiently high.

Hawthorne and Stanley's version of the knowledge norm for action and how they deal with high stakes concerns is instructive for the wider set of high stakes cases. They agree that it is more natural to appraise behavior in terms of knowledge than justified belief and provides greater explanatory force. They follow Williamson in recognizing knowledge as the norm for action and suggest that "our ordinary folk appraisals of the behavior of others suggest that the concept of knowledge is intimately intertwined with the rationality of action" [Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), p. 571]. When individuals can act on the basis of a belief that is not knowledge, we rightly chastise them for acting on improper epistemic grounds. Hawthorne and Stanley's Knowledge-Knowledge Principle asserts that you should treat "the proposition that p as a reason for acting only if you know that p. … When someone acts in a belief that does not amount to knowledge, she violates the norm, and is hence subject to criticism" [*Ibid.* p. 577]. This explains both why people can act and why particular people do act in certain ways. Knowledge changes any given rationalizing reason (viz., one's reason for acting) into an individual's motivating reason (viz., one's reason for acting) [*Ibid.* p. 580]. Yet Hawthorne and Stanley's case-based argument for the knowledge norm leads them to depart from Williamson and hew closer to my position. For instance, they offer a revised lottery case and note that selling a ticket to a

10 000 ticket lottery with a $5 000 prize for one cent on the basis that you will not win and will thus get nothing is irrational; they state that it "is not acceptable to act on one's belief that one will lose the lottery" because that belief is not knowledge [*Ibid.* p. 572].[12] Their invocation of the lottery case suggests that pragmatic facts may alter the level of knowledge required on the epistemic condition for knowledge.

Hawthorne and Stanley's reasoning seems to suggest that one cannot take certain bets even if one does have knowledge (and the requisite desire).[13] Even knowing which outcome will arise in a given circumstance seems problematic where the stakes are sufficiently high. Betting on the death of 10 children for even the guarantee of one cent is an unlikely, wrongful action. It is more morally wrongful than a robbery and at least as epistemically vexing. Objective certainty and/or (at least uniterable) knowledge that is constituted by Williamsonian evidence can be equally problematic across many cases. Hawthorne and Stanley thus sketch a concept of stakes-sensitive knowledge that builds on this example. It is instructive for those trying to account for high stakes without overriding the epistemic norm of action and suffering explanatory loss:

> If knowledge is constitutively related to one's practical environment, then it is open to us to claim that while one may know that p in a situation where not much is at stake as concerns the proposition that p, one loses knowledge once one enters an environment where a good deal is at stake as regards the truth or falsity of the proposition that p. On such a view, knowledge – and hence probability 1 – vanishes when the stakes go up [*Ibid.* p. 588].

Given high stakes on this picture, one cannot act since one no longer knows a given piece of information. Knowledge retains its role as the norm for action and is operative in its negation. One is not warranted in taking the high stakes bet above because one does not know the outcome given the high stakes involved. Probability 1 is not guaranteed in sufficiently high stakes scenarios. Pragmatic facts about the environment help to constitute knowledge. Practical facts about high stakes in particular are capable of eliminating knowledge, helping to explain why individuals do not (and should not) take high stakes bets even when they appear to have knowledge of an outcome absent such stakes. On Hawthorne and Stanley's view, then, one needs to act on a knowledge-desire pair to act on the basis of proper epistemic reasons (rather than a belief-desire pair). Yet the standards for what will count as knowledge get higher as

the pragmatic consequences of action rise. These stakes help constitute what knowledge *is*.

Further thought experiments support pragmatic encroachment as a solution to the aforementioned tension in Williamson identified. It is easy to think of low stakes cases in which non-iterable knowledge is (epistemically) sufficient for one to act on his or her desire. The simplest cases are basic cases built on perceptual knowledge. I know that there is a pen and a piece of paper in front of me and want to write this paragraph. While Sosa and other argue that we are not always warranted in acting on such banal knowledge, it is not a stretch to say that I am (all-else-being-equal) epistemically justified in grabbing for the pen and paper. This intuition that knowledge justifies action in low stakes scenarios likely follows in complicated cases too.[14] The reader can imagine many analogous cases. Non-iterable knowledge (when paired with desire) clearly appears sufficient to justify action in many lower stake cases.[15] Williamson's hard cases are the high stakes ones. They support adopting pragmatic encroachment. I already noted that Williamson's own robbery case seems to show that iterable knowledge is necessary in high stakes cases and raises the aforementioned tension in his view. The plausibility of the normative goals shifting depending on stakes becomes clearer when one keeps the positive stakes constant and lower the negative stakes. Consider the following variants of the robbery case:

> *Incompetent Government.* The robber seeks the same diamond and has the same evidence of all relevant factors and same mental states as in Williamson's original case. Yet a police strike has left the department shortchanged and unable to patrol the streets. Police rarely visit this neighborhood unless called. In the day in question, many of the strikebreakers have been pulled off active duty to attend a celebration in their honor at city hall on the other side of town.

> *Prison Abolitionist.* All the conditions in Williamson's original robbery case obtain except that society has decided not to punish breaking and entering and/or theft with prison sentences. The punishment is changed to a notice in the newspaper that the robber committed a moral wrong and a literal slap on the wrist.

The claim that non-iterable knowledge is sufficient for the robber to justifiably stay in the house in these circumstances is far more plausible than the claim that in Williamson's original case. Yet something lower than

knowledge likely does not justify staying in the house longer either. The possibility of prison in the first case certainly justifies epistemic caution. It is unwise to stay in the house without knowledge in the second case too. Indeed, the public censure in that case is supposed to be a deterrent on immoral actions in standard ethical theories and no one likes a literal slap on the wrist. As stakes get lower in a variety of cases, then, it appears that non-iterable knowledge, but no lower epistemic status, will suffice to warrant action. The apparent requirement for iterable knowledge in Williamson's original case may simply be a case of a higher standard for knowledge attribution in those higher stakes cases.

Pragmatic encroachment, then, explains the appropriate epistemic responses in both the robbery case and variants thereof. Experimental philosophy suggests that it is also necessary to explain a wider set of high stakes cases [Pinillos (2012)]. Where the knowledge of action is supposed to be both explanatory and normative, this alone counts as an achievement. Yet this does not exhaust the benefits of adopting pragmatic encroachment as a specification of Option (2). It is also worth noting that this option is the least radical departure from Williamson's original view that explains these cases and resolves the tension with minimal changes to Williamson's picture. Williamson would not accept this solution to the purported tension in his view. He repeatedly rejects pragmatic encroachment. He may personally be unable to accept it given his other commitments. Yet giving up on the falsity of KK would be an even more radical departure. Williamson denies KK even more forcefully than he denies pragmatic encroachment. Giving up on the knowledge norm of action, in turn, may seem like a less radical departure than giving up on the falsity of KK, but it may be a bigger tactical mistake. For John Gibbons, knowledge's explanatory and normative role in action is necessary to even establish knowledge as a mental state, a *de minimus* requirement of any knowledge-first epistemology [Gibbons (2001), pp. 579ff]. For Williamson, it is crucial to establishing the primacy of that mental state. This is arguably nearly as important for motivating knowledge-first epistemology. Dropping the knowledge norm of action would also be a more radical departure than accepting pragmatic encroachment.

Indeed, Williamson provides some room for letting pragmatic encroachment into his view. Williamson sometimes speaks as if probability 1 cannot be lost. Yet, elsewhere, he seems to recognize that new knowledge can change other knowledge. He writes, "[p]resent knowledge is less vulnerable than mere present true belief to *rational* undermining by future evidence, which is not to say that it is completely invulnerable to

such undermining" [Williamson (2000), p. 79]. New knowledge about stakes could plausibly be understood as new evidence that rationally undermines previous knowledge about which of two outcomes is likely to arise.[16] Williamson may not let this recognition lead him down the path to pragmatic encroachment, but it is the closest path he can take to resolve the above tension in his view.

If these benefits accrue to the pragmatic encroachment-imbued version of Option (2), this provides further reason to accept it in lieu of other alternatives: in short, if pragmatic encroachment can explain the cases above and thereby resolve the tension in Williamson's view, then Option (1) (adopting KK) and/or rejecting the knowledge norm of action are/is no longer necessary. Pragmatic encroachment can resolve the tension between the non-luminosity of knowledge and the knowledge norm of action by explaining why iterable or iterated knowledge appears to be required for one to act differently than those with mere justified true beliefs in some cases, but uniterated or even uniterable knowledge appears to be enough for people to justifiably act differently than those with justified true beliefs in other cases. The choice between adopting KK and rejecting the knowledge norm of action thus no longer presents itself. Adopting KK is unpalatable for most theorists (but again see Greco (2014)). As noted above, rejecting the knowledge norm of action is unpalatable for knowledge-firsters. Both are unpalatable to me. Where knowledge-first epistemology is now one of the most fruitful areas of research in contemporary epistemology, I see no reason to reject it outright due to a tension that can be solved with relative ease.

VI. Lingering Concerns

Ultimately, then, an additive, potentially non-Williamsonian approach is needed to explain why we act differently in the fact of high stakes. I further believe that pragmatic encroachment is necessary to explain why we justifiably act differently on the basis of uniterable knowledge than we would on the basis of justified true beliefs in some cases, but not others. The epistemic norms in a high stakes case are qualitatively different from those in low stakes cases. This may explain why Williamson's robber needs iterated knowledge to stay in a house searching for a diamond, but even uniterable knowledge may lead others to act differently than those with justified true beliefs when a lengthy prison sentence for breaking and entering and robbery is not a possible out-

come of a given line of action. When these issues are clear, pragmatic encroachment appears necessary for knowledge to play its full explanatory and normative role in many cases. It is thus necessary for establishing one of the values of knowledge as the primary epistemic mental state: its role in action. The standard for knowledge sufficient for acting where the knowledge norm of action obtains varies with stakes.

There are, however, costs to this position even beyond the potentially damning recognition that probability 1 may not be persistent (and therefore may not always be reliable). Most notably, this appears to require an account of stakes that is difficult to develop. Explaining *how* practical facts operate on our knowledge is difficult to determine, particularly where knowledge is the only evidence base available for judging new facts.[17] The first issue is that it is unclear *how* high stakes change knowledge. They appear to be constitutive elements of knowledge that change with it, but this language undermines claims about the unanalyzable nature of knowledge. Iteration again raises its head. Whether you need to know that you know practical facts is important for determining whether you know a given proposition that is partially constituted by that fact. High stakes as a mechanism appears mysterious. This is related to a second potential issue. It is similarly unclear *when* stakes are sufficiently high to change the nature of knowledge operative in a given scenario. It is thus unclear when a norm warrants or negates a particular action and when one can or should judge individuals' actions.

Weighing the benefits and risks, I am willing to bite the bullet suggesting there is an (at least quasi-)additive component to this pragmatic encroachment account. Knowledge-first epistemology should accept pragmatic encroachment in its descriptive and normative action regardless of whether Williamson would do so. This 'addition' is not a particularly damning one. Knowledge can remain primitive even as one acknowledges that practical facts have an impact on it. Indeed, Gibbons (2001) recognizes that the world plays a causal role in our actions. Allowing certain practical facts to fulfill this role is not particularly problematic. Knowledge can remain prime so long as one recognizes that one's beliefs must track these practical facts in order to remain knowledge. One must know these practical facts in order for them to be operative.

Knowing when stakes sufficiently change is more problematic. Whether one also needs to know that they know these practical facts is tricky. I do not argue for a pragmatic encroachment-reliant version of KK above, but instead deny that adopting KK is necessary to resolve the tension that I identify. The lack of luminosity here appears to be no dif-

ferent from other views. Yet I grant that it is plausible that some form of luminosity appears necessary to explain why people act in certain ways. Regardless, a full account of when stakes change is necessary to fill out the knowledge-first epistemology and confirm its explanatory and normative value in accounting for action. This cost for future scholars is small when compared to giving up on one of the key values of knowledge as *the* primitive epistemological concept.

VII. CONCLUSION

While some scholars think that luminous knowledge can best serve as the basis for a knowledge norm of action, one need not adopt KK to adopt the knowledge norm of action. Recognizing pragmatic encroachment is only a small variation to Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology and resolves the tension between his anti-luminosity and his knowledge norm of action. This variation to Williamson's view can explain Williamson's robbery case (which I use as my exemplar of the apparent tension in his view above), other high stakes cases (where the temptation to adopt KK as part of the knowledge norm of action may be greatest), and differing intuitions between high and low stakes cases. Recognizing pragmatic encroachment thereby avoids forcing a choice between adopting the knowledge norm of action and KK and rejecting both; it should resolve the tension in Williamson's view across a number of non-robbery cases.

Emphasizing other aspects of Williamson's view and/or otherwise altering his view will require changes that are more radical or fail to explain many cases.[18] Emphasizing knowledge's status as a prime condition, by contrast, does not vary Williamson's position at all and serves to provide at least a partial explanation of cases where iterated knowledge appears necessary but is inoperative, but this condition cannot explain or correctly account for our normative implications about high stakes cases. These issues can only be resolved by allowing pragmatic encroachment to affect the prime condition: knowledge. Further knowledge about practical facts, particularly high stakes, is necessary to complete the pragmatic encroachment picture, but this is a small price to pay for establishing a key value of knowledge as a prime condition.

Where pragmatic encroachment explains a class of actions Williamson's project has difficulty explaining without running afoul of the general non-Williamsonian knowledge-first program, the supplementation of

Williamson's view to recognize pragmatic encroachment should appeal to those who are generally sympathetic to his view, but recognize its internal tensions. Pragmatic encroachment, then, can resolve a tension at the center of one of the most promising research projects in contemporary epistemology. This provides further (non-dispositive) reason to adopt it beyond those recognized by the pragmatic encroachment pioneers.[19]

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NOTES

[1] For a good overview of other arguments against the knowledge norm of action, see McGlynn (2014), pp. 135-137.

[2] 'Pragmatic encroachment' also goes by other names, including 'interest-relativism'. See e.g., Stanley (2005) and Weatherson (2012).

[3] McGlynn (2014), pp. 14-18, identifies six key theses, but they are not all propositional and are not all about knowledge so much as the basic features of his broader epistemology. They are: "Knowledge is unanalysable.", "Knowledge is prior to belief.", "Knowledge is prior to justification.", "Knowledge is the 'Unexplained Explainer'.", "Knowledge norms.", and "Knowledge as the most important mental state with mind-to-world fit."

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] McGlynn (2014), p. 132, sees a second version of the norm in Hawthorne & Stanley (2008), but he does not pursue it: "One ought to rely on P as a premise in one's practical reasoning only if one knows that P." Nothing changes below if one adopts this alternative articulation.

[6] See McGlynn (2014), p. 132, for a caveat to this traditional understanding: "The case for the knowledge norm of action closely parallels that for the knowledge norm of assertion, except that there is no direct analogue of Moore's paradox." Note that I use male gender pronouns in discussing the case that motivates the knowledge of action because Williamson does so in the original case and a robber is a negative character.

[7] My argument for this claim does not rely on a "commonality" thesis (as identified and criticized by Brown (2012) and discussed in e.g., Gerken (2014)) whereby assertion and action both should be subject to the same epistemic norm. Nor does it rely on a negative inverse of the commonality thesis whereby an attack on one knowledge norm necessarily serves as an attack on another. Saying that the knowledge norms of actions and assertion suffer from similar defects does not necessarily entail or imply that the norms stand and fall togeth-

er. My argument does, however, suggest that the knowledge norm of action is subject to a criticism that is structurally similar to Sosa's particular argument against the knowledge norm of assertion.

8 Importantly, McGlynn 'brackets' the stakes/pragmatic encroachment question that is central below in his own chapter on the knowledge norm of action; McGlynn (2014), p. 131, suggests that the stakes question is one of the few issues that does not mirror those in the assertion chapter. My view is that the stakes question is central because pragmatic encroachment can help resolve a tension in Williamson's view.

9 Fantl & McGrath independently develop a theory of pragmatic encroachment in non-Williamsonian terms in e.g., (2007). They suggest that the argument that stakes are relevant for knowledge prescriptions goes back at least as far as Hookway (1990). Some of the most famous cases that raise sympathetic intuitions appear in DeRose (1992). Brown (2014) describes Fantl & McGrath's view as the 'Relevance Approach' and contrasts it with Hawthorne & Stanley's 'Unity Approach'. I take Hawthorne & Stanley's Williamsonian route to pragmatic encroachment, but my own view is closer to a Relevance Approach than a Unity Approach (and I suspect Hawthorne & Stanley could be charitably read as adopting a similar view).

10 Prime conditions, in other words, require matching between internal and external states that can be recombined into a new condition [Williamson (2000), Chapter 3].

11 Hawthorne & Stanley (2008) frame this in terms of a contract that pays out differently depending on which of two outcomes arises, but it is structurally similar to a bet.

12 See Williamson (2000), p. 576, for more:

> Our reaction to the lottery case is not that the subject does not know that he will not win the lottery because it is not rational to act upon that supposition. It is rather that it is not rational to act on the proposition that she will not win because she does not know that she will not win.

13 Technically, their cases concern subjective certainty, not knowledge. One cannot sell one's lottery ticket on the basis of a belief that s/he will lose since s/he does not know that s/he will lose. Yet subjective certainty may not license taking other, similar bets where the stakes are high enough. Similar reasoning applies to knowledge as a norm for action.

14 Consider, for instance, the case where one desires a hot dog at a ballpark and knows that hot dogs are available at a concession stand. No complicated thought experiments or philosophical trickery is necessary to say that this person is warranted in walking to the concession stand. Sticklers may add that in this case, there is no issue with deliveries of hot dogs to the stand, it is early in a ballgame, and there has never been a sellout of hot dogs or cooking problem this early in the game. While one can even add that the person is in question is

the hot dog delivery person and delivered the hot dogs earlier in the day, the delivery person is hardly the only person who is warranted in walking to the stand.

[15] In some of these cases, it will seem like even a lower epistemic state may play this role. These cases are the most popular counterexamples to Williamson's knowledge norm of action in the literature [see McGlynn (2014) again] but need not detain us here. This piece seeks to explain and resolve an internal tension in Williamson's view. This piece does not attempt to argue for the knowledge norm of action as preferable to all other lower epistemic norms of action. Moreover, these cases can be easily built into Williamson's picture and my variant. On Williamson's picture, they can be recast as either cases where non-iterable knowledge suffices or cases where Williamson can plausibly claim that knowledge is necessary but lower epistemic standards that aim at knowledge can appear to play this role. Alternatively, in my variant, knowledge attributions in these cases are easier to establish due to lower stakes.

[16] This is particularly true where 'E=K' as described in the next endnote.

[17] This is the case in Williamson's E(vidence)=K(nowledge) framework. The 'E=K' thesis "equates S's evidence with S's knowledge, for every individual or community S in any possible situation. … The concept *knows* is fundamental, the primary implement of epistemological inquiry" [Williamson (2000), p. 185]. On this view, "all of one's knowledge serves as the foundation for all one's justified beliefs" [*Ibid.*, p. 186].

[18] E.g., adding components to Williamsonian knowledge makes knowledge analyzable, which is a more radical variation of Williamsonian knowledge, while adopting a justified belief or luminous knowledge norm of action would change Williamson's account of the norm of action entirely, undermining one of the core components of his argument for knowledge-first epistemology.

[19] The initial ideas for this paper arose in a seminar led by Jason Stanley many years ago. I thank him and the students in that seminar for getting me started in this analysis. Thank you also to the audience at the 2015 meeting of the Society of Exact Philosophy for comments on an earlier, quite different version of this text and to Luis Valdes and the judges of the **teorema** Young Scholars Essay Prize competition for the audience, award, and final edits.

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