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Deliberative Indispensability and Epistemic Justification

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

According to one influential view in metaethics (e.g. Harman 1977; Boyd 1997), we are justified in believing in ethical facts just in case they (or their reduction base) feature in our best explanations of scientifically respectable phenomena. This naturalistic criterion, however, can seem to miss a crucial point. Many of us care about the existence of ethical facts not because of scientific-explanatory roles that they may play, but rather because we seemingly need such facts to make adequate sense of our practical lives. This suggests a *Tempting Idea*: that the (putative) indispensability of belief in ethical facts for our practical projects—including, for example, the project of deliberating about what to do—can justify our belief in such facts. Some version of this idea has attracted a range of philosophers, including Christine Korsgaard (1996), Ronald Dworkin (2011), and T. M. Scanlon (2014).

Any philosopher hoping to develop the Tempting Idea needs to answer two questions. First: which beliefs are relevantly indispensable? And second: what is the significance of this indispensability? David Enoch has recently spelled out a powerful and novel version of the Tempting Idea, which he develops primarily in "An Outline of an Argument for Robust Metanormative Realism" (2007) and chapter 3 of his *Taking Morality Seriously* (2011b). Enoch's account offers ambitious answers to each of these questions.

In response to the first question, Enoch argues for the indispensability of belief in what he calls *Robust Realism* about ethical facts.[1] According to

[1] Three clarificatory notes. First, strictly speaking, Enoch takes certain belief-forming *methods* to be indispensable. In calling belief in Robust Realism "indispensable" here, we

Robust Realism, ethical facts are ungrounded, irreducibly normative, and psychology-independent. Further, Enoch claims that Robust Realism is incompatible with a quietist or quasi-realist interpretation of these metaphysical claims. Enoch argues that such belief is indispensable to the project of practical deliberation: the project that we engage in when we seek to choose what to do (2011b: 70–3). This idea is intensely controversial and well worth examining. However, in this chapter we set it aside, in order to focus on Enoch's answer to the second question.

In response to the second question, Enoch argues that deliberative indispensability is significant because such indispensability can epistemically justify belief. More precisely, Enoch defends:

> **Indispensabilism** If a belief-forming method is indispensable to the project of practical deliberation, then that method is a source of basic epistemic justification.

For someone hoping to develop the Tempting Idea into a response to the naturalistic epistemic criterion mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Indispensabilism has three striking virtues. First, it claims to underwrite *epistemic* justification (the Tempting Idea itself is silent on the type of justification provided). If defensible, it thus constitutes a direct rebuttal to the naturalistic criterion. Absent this claim, a defense of the Tempting Idea threatens to suggest that our capacity for practical deliberation dooms us—either causally or rationally—to epistemic irrationality. Second, Indispensabilism promises to ameliorate a standard worry about metaethical views that violate the naturalistic criterion: that they are forced to posit a special capacity to directly perceive non-natural ethical facts. A proponent of Indispensabilism can argue that our justification for belief in such facts is explained by the deliberative indispensability of such belief, rather than by a mythical perceptual capacity. A third virtue of Indispensabilism is its neutrality concerning the nature and grounds of ethical facts. One might try to defend the Tempting Idea in part by arguing that facts about indispensability explain the fundamental ethical facts. By contrast with this approach, if

signal that, according to Enoch, it follows from the proper deployment of an indispensable method. We explain this part of Enoch's reasoning in more detail below (in section 5.2). Second, we treat *facts* as the standard metaphysical relata throughout, while Enoch typically talks of *truths*. We take this change to be unobjectionable given Enoch's commitments, a point that he himself emphasizes (2011b: 5). Third, we talk of *ethical* facts, where Enoch tends to talk of *normative* facts. We mean "ethical" here broadly, to refer to the normative and evaluative facts that govern our practical lives. We insist on this change in wording because epistemic facts are also normative, and because the contrast between ethical and epistemic normativity is central to our project here.

Indispensabilism could be defended, it might be adapted to permit proponents of a variety of metaethical views to vindicate the Tempting Idea.

For these reasons, we take Indispensabilism to be an important thesis. However, in this chapter, we argue that Indispensabilism should be rejected. The core reason is this: Indispensabilism conflicts with part of what is distinctive of epistemic justification.

The distinctiveness of epistemic justification can be suggested by the following thought-experiment. Suppose that Hallie believes that when she sings "Don't Stop Believin'" in the shower, she sounds exactly like Journey's Steve Perry. This belief is strikingly irrational: merely attending carefully to the sound of her own voice would suffice to disabuse her of this belief, and her trustworthy friends have let her know how silly her belief is. Now suppose that an evil demon lets Hallie know that if she ceases to hold this belief, the demon will brutally torture every sentient being that exists. This fact gives Hallie very strong practical reasons to retain her belief, but evidently does nothing to epistemically justify her belief. The case of Hallie dramatizes the familiar point that ethical and epistemic normativity appear to be very different things, by showing that one can have overwhelming ethical justification for a belief, while lacking any epistemic justification for it.[2]

This stark contrast helps to frame our thesis. At best, the fact that something is deliberatively indispensable can perhaps provide ethical reasons for belief. However, it is not the right sort of thing to underwrite *epistemic justification*. Thus, Indispensabilism must be rejected.

Our chapter proceeds as follows. We start by laying out our exemplary stalking horse: Enoch's case for Indispensabilism (section 5.2). We then argue that Enoch's case fails because it elides a distinctive feature of genuinely *epistemic* justification, a feature that we dub *Truth-Directedness* (section 5.3). Briefly, according to Truth-Directedness, the norms of epistemic justification have the content they do because of some positive connection to the truth of the beliefs these norms govern. (We give a more precise characterization of this thesis in section 5.3.) Because Enoch's account fails to respect a crucial part of what is distinctive about epistemic justification, it thereby fails as a defense of Indispensabilism (which, recall, is a thesis *about* epistemic justification). Enoch's specific proposal, however, is just one possible attempt to defend Indispensabilism. We go on to argue that our

[2] There might be other ways of drawing the distinction between Hallie's different reasons that would work for our argumentative purposes in this chapter. Our point is that however one draws this distinction, the case of Hallie brings out an intuitive and important contrast between two different sets of norms that an agent can be subject to. We are characterizing one set of these norms as the norms of genuine *epistemic justification*, and we submit that it is deeply intuitive that only one set of these norms can plausibly be understood this way.

objection generalizes to a range of salient alternatives to Enoch's way of defending Indispensabilism. These alternatives are based on leading general approaches in contemporary epistemology. We argue that looking at these alternative defenses of Indispensabilism reveals a general tension between Truth-Directedness and Indispensabilism (and not just Enoch's particular defense of it). We thus conclude that deliberative indispensability does *not* epistemically justify belief (section 5.4). Although our main argument in this chapter is directed at Indispensabilism, part of our goal here is to get clearer on what it would take to defend the initial Tempting Idea, and to assess the prospects for doing so. We thus examine three ways of attempting to salvage the Tempting Idea, in the face of our argument. We briefly argue that each of these attempts faces significant costs. In light of this, we suggest that pessimism is warranted about the Tempting Idea itself (section 5.5). We conclude the paper with brief reflections on the broader metaethical significance of our arguments (section 5.6).

5.2 ENOCH'S DEFENSE OF INDISPENSABILISM

In this section and the next, we aim to illustrate the promise and perils of Indispensabilism by exploring its powerful recent defense by David Enoch. In this section, we first explain the role of that defense in Enoch's case for his Robust Realism about ethical facts. This illuminates part of the potential metaethical significance of Indispensabilism. We then lay out the details of Enoch's case for Indispensabilism, which puts us in a position to evaluate it in the following section.

5.2.1 From Deliberative Indispensability to Robust Realism

To understand any indispensability argument, one must understand the notion of indispensability being deployed. We thus begin by unpacking two technical notions that Enoch introduces: an *intrinsically indispensable project*, and something's being *instrumentally indispensable* to such a project. We then introduce the outline of Enoch's ambitious deliberative indispensability argument for Robust Realism about ethical facts.

On Enoch's account, a project is *intrinsically indispensable* if it is "rationally non-optional," such that disengaging from it "is not a rationally acceptable option" (2011b: 70).[3] This entails that one is rationally criticizeable if

[3] While some philosophers (e.g., Broome 1999; Kolodny 2005) use "rationality" to talk about distinctively *structural* normativity, Enoch uses "rationality" here as a way to talk about substantive normative facts.

one does disengage from such a project. It is worth emphasizing that this account is explicitly normative. A project thus does not count as intrinsically indispensable in Enoch's sense simply because one is stuck with engaging in it (in the non-normative sense of "stuck with").[4]

There can be necessary conditions for pursuing such a project. According to Enoch, for something to be *instrumentally indispensable* to a project is for its elimination to undermine or attenuate the reasons that we had for engaging in that project in the first place. Crucially, Enoch wants to distinguish such instrumentally indispensable features from mere "enabling conditions" for a project. For example, take the relationship between getting adequate sleep and the project of engaging in scientific inquiry. Enoch claims that while getting enough sleep might be an enabling condition for this project, it is not instrumentally indispensable to this project, in the sense of "instrumentally indispensable" that he has in mind (2011b: 68).

With these clarifications in hand, we can now present Enoch's overall indispensability argument in schematic form:[5]

1. If (implicitly or explicitly) treating a belief-forming method as a source of basic epistemic justification is instrumentally indispensable to an intrinsically indispensable project, then that method is a source of basic epistemic justification (2011b: 60–4).
2. The project of practical deliberation is intrinsically indispensable (2011b: 70–3).
3. Treating our commitments in practical deliberation as a source of basic epistemic justification is instrumentally indispensable to the deliberative project (cf. 2011b: 67–9).
4. Therefore, our commitments in practical deliberation are a source of basic epistemic justification (from premises 1–3).

[4] On this point, Enoch (2011b) differs from his (2007) presentation of his indispensability argument. This change makes Enoch's metaethical views more consistent: as he himself notes, the earlier version of his argument faces his own "schmagency" challenge to attempts to explain authoritative normativity in terms of necessary facts about agency (Enoch 2006). The change also allows Enoch to avoid intuitive worries that afflict his earlier argument. For example, we can imagine possible creatures who are doomed to engage in worthless projects—perhaps because they were designed to be doomed in this way. It is especially hard to see why serving such a project could epistemically justify otherwise unsupported beliefs. For these reasons, we take Enoch's explicitly normative gloss on intrinsic indispensability in his (2011b) to be a significant improvement on the original (2007) version.

[5] Enoch provides a simpler schematic summary of his argument (2011b: 83). However, because that reconstruction elides detail in his argument that is crucial to our discussion here, we have provided our own, slightly more complex summary here.

5. In practical deliberation, we are committed to belief in the existence of ethical facts, as they are conceived of by Robust Realism (2011b: 71–9).
6. Therefore, (because sources of basic epistemic justification provide defeasible epistemic justification) we have defeasible epistemic justification for believing in the existence of Robustly Real ethical facts (from premises 4–5).

Premises (1) and (2) of this argument entail (a variant of) Indispensabilism. The remainder of the argument shows that, together with the further claims about practical deliberation in premises (3) and (5), Indispensabilism can support an ambitious metaethical view: namely, Robust Realism about ethical facts. Note that at various points in this chapter, we will abbreviate the sort of case just sketched for (6)— and theses like it—by saying that, according to Enoch, *deliberative indispensability provides basic justification for believing that P*.

This argument illustrates the potential metaethical significance of Indispensabilism, and also illustrates why it is such a powerful way of developing the Tempting Idea that we introduced at the start of this chapter. Enoch appears to offer a clear and principled account of how epistemically justified belief in non-natural ethical facts is possible, and, moreover, to do so in a way that also provides a kind of positive argument for Robust Realism in metaethics. It is a positive argument for Robust Realism (a metaphysical thesis) for the following straightforward reason: it is telling you that you have epistemic reason to believe this metaphysical thesis.

We have significant worries about premises (2), (3), and (5) of the argument.[6] However, the metaethical bite of Indispensabilism extends beyond Enoch's own defense of this thesis. This is because the basic Indispensabilist idea could potentially be combined with a variety of auxiliary commitments (in lieu of premises (2–5)), to epistemically justify various commitments in or about ethics. The epistemic heart of Enoch's argument that achieves these results is premise (1). In the next subsection, we thus explore Enoch's case for this premise in detail.

[6] Here are two examples. First, premise (3) is challenged by the existence of credible anti-intuitionist approaches to moral epistemology. Second, with premises (2) and (5), Enoch faces a version of a dilemma he himself has pressed against the constitutivist: the more you build into a conception of practical deliberation, the less plausible it is that doing *that* is rationally non-optional (2011b: 71–2). We find it especially doubtful that belief in the existence of ethical facts, as conceived of by Robust Realism is deliberatively indispensable. For related challenges, see Husi (2013: §4), Lenman (2014), and Björnsson and Olinder (forthcoming).

5.2.2 Enoch's Strategy for Vindicating Indispensabilism

Enoch's defense of Indispensabilism presupposes a specific kind of foundationalist picture of the structure of epistemic justification. On this picture, certain belief-forming methods are *epistemically derivative* while others are *epistemically basic*. Consider an example of an epistemically derivative method: someone might be justified in using the results of a DNA test as evidence of paternity, but only because she has prior evidence of the reliability of the test. By contrast, consider belief-forming methods such as reliance on sense perception and memory, inference to the best explanation, and inference rules like *modus ponens*. Enoch claims that these methods are *epistemically basic*: using these methods can produce defeasibly epistemically justified belief, even when we lack independent epistemic justification for using them (Enoch 2011b: 58; cf. Enoch and Schechter 2008). For uniformity, we will call these methods *sources of basic epistemic justification.*

Enoch argues that philosophers who endorse the foundationalist picture face the burden of explaining the facts in virtue of which only some belief-forming methods are basic justifiers (Enoch 2011b: 59ff.; Enoch and Schechter 2008: 547). What, we might demand, explains the contrast between reliance on memory and reliance on DNA testing? Note that this is *not* a request for an epistemic justification for treating certain sources as basic. Rather, the question is: what *explains* why these sources have the status of being epistemically basic?

Enoch calls the sort of explanation he is after here a "vindication." The details of Enoch's own glosses on this term are not totally clear. We will understand a *vindication* as an explanation of the distinctive epistemic status of the methods that are basic sources of justification, where this explanation fits with (or, ideally, supports) the intuitive normative significance of these sources. This is in contrast to an explanation that debunks that purported significance or reforms it away (cf. 2011b: 60). One might be able to provide a vindication in this sense by using one of a variety of different types of philosophical explanation.[7] We think that Enoch's own approach to offering a vindication is best understood as a grounding account: a metaphysical account that explains the facts in virtue of which certain sources provide basic epistemic justification.[8] We join Enoch in taking the demand

[7] Consider two familiar alternatives. First, one might propose a vindication of the sources of basic epistemic justification by providing an ontological reduction of the *source of basic epistemic justification* relation. Second, a proponent of ambitious conceptual analyses (à la Jackson 1998) might propose a vindication via an analysis of the concept BASIC SOURCE OF JUSTIFICATION that illuminated its extension.

[8] For a helpful overview of grounding in contemporary metaphysics, see Trogdon (2013).

for a vindication of the sources of basic epistemic justification to be forceful (modulo the controversial assumption of the truth of foundationalism). And we are happy to grant for the sake of argument that such a vindication should take the form of a grounding account. Our concern in this section is with the specific grounding account that Enoch proposes. Enoch originally developed the core of this account in joint work with Joshua Schechter (Schechter and Enoch 2006: §6; Enoch and Schechter 2008).

Because Enoch calls his vindicating account a "pragmatic" one, we will appropriate this handy (if slightly misleading) label to refer to his account. This account can be stated as follows:

> **Pragmatic** One complete ground for the fact that something is a source of basic epistemic justification is the fact that treating it as such a basic source is instrumentally indispensable to an intrinsically indispensable project.[9]

Pragmatic trivially entails premise (1) of Enoch's argument. And it is thus the crucial step in his case for Indispensabilism (we are granting him the other element of that case: the assumption that practical deliberation is an intrinsically indispensable project). En route to assessing Pragmatic's plausibility as a vindicating account for the sources of basic epistemic justification, we sketch three virtues of this thesis.

Pragmatic's first virtue is that it appears to offer a credible explanation of the *substantive normativity* of the basic epistemic justification facts. What do we mean by this? Contrast epistemic norms with the norms of chess, or fashion. Indifference to the "epistemic evaluation game" seems like an objective flaw, in a way that indifference to chess or the norms of fashion does not: the epistemic norms appear to have normative substance in a way these other norms do not.[10] As we have seen, Enoch's conception of indispensability appeals to ethical facts, which are themselves substantively normative. It thus entails that basic epistemic justification facts will be grounded partly in substantively normative facts. Because grounding can arguably transmit normativity, being grounded in substantively normative facts seems like a promising way to explain the substantive normativity of the epistemic justification facts.

[9] Enoch's clearest official statement of his thesis (2011b: 63) provides a mere sufficiency condition for being a source of basic epistemic justification. Enoch clearly intends the thesis to be explanatory, and our formulation reflects that fact. It should be noted that many important motivations for this thesis (including both motivations that we discuss below) would be more compelling if Pragmatic were strengthened to purport to explain the complete grounds of *all* basic sources of justification.

[10] See McPherson (2011: section 4) for a brief exploration of this contrast, in terms of "formal" vs. "robust" normativity.

Second, Enoch suggests that Pragmatic is plausible in part because it is capable of explaining the epistemic status of a plausible range of the sources of basic epistemic justification. Enoch takes inference to the best explanation (IBE) as his leading illustration. On Enoch's account, IBE is a source of basic epistemic justification because (i) the project of understanding and explaining the world around us is rationally non-optional, and (ii) deploying IBE is instrumentally indispensable for creatures like us pursuing this project (2011b: 60–1).

Enoch's focus on IBE has a further, dialectical payoff. The naturalistic criterion for justifying commitment to ethical facts that we introduced at the beginning of this chapter appeals crucially to IBE. And this criterion seriously threatens Enoch's Robust Realism, since, on his view, the fundamental ethical facts are irreducible and do not explain anything non-normative. It also threatens all arguments from deliberative indispensability, since deliberative indispensability does not entail explanatory indispensability.

If we suppose that Enoch is right that Pragmatic provides the most plausible vindication for the epistemic status of IBE, however, the threat posed by the naturalistic criterion is neutralized. This is because (as Enoch argues) Pragmatic can vindicate other sources of basic epistemic justification besides IBE. Further, deliberative indispensability arguments are no longer threatened, because deliberative indispensability is claimed to explain the epistemic status of IBE itself.

Enoch's case for Pragmatic is part of a clear and carefully developed argument for Indispensabilism. The virtues just canvassed so far also suggest that this argument for Indispensabilism is promising. However, in the next section, we argue that despite its promising features, Enoch's defense of Pragmatic is ultimately unsuccessful.

5.3 EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION AND TRUTH

This section sets out our case against Pragmatic—Enoch's vindicating account of the sources of basic epistemic justification. We begin by articulating and defending a partial characterization of what is distinctive of epistemic justification: that it is directed at the truth (section 5.3.1). We then introduce three intuitive counterexamples to Pragmatic, and argue that the force of these counterexamples is well explained by the truth-directedness of epistemic justification (section 5.3.2). We argue that our theory of the truth-directed nature of epistemic justification, coupled with these counterexamples, gives us strong reason to reject Pragmatic (section 5.3.3).

A vindicating account of a phenomenon is supposed to explain and uphold our intuitive commitments with respect to that phenomenon, rather than debunking or substantially reforming them. A vindicating account of the sources of basic epistemic justification should thus accomplish at least the three following goals. First, it should explain (or at least be compatible with) the most plausible theses about which sources of epistemic justification are basic. Second, it should explain (or at least be compatible with) the apparent normative substantiveness of the norms of epistemic justification. Third, it should explain (or at least be compatible with) our sense of what is *distinctive* of the norms of epistemic justification.

In the previous subsection, we saw that Enoch makes a prima facie case that Pragmatic meets the first desideratum, by arguing that Pragmatic can explain the status of belief-forming methods like IBE. We also saw that there is a good case to be made that it meets the second desideratum. This is because Pragmatic grounds facts about the sources of basic epistemic justification partly in ethical facts.

The third desideratum demands that a vindicating account of the sources of basic epistemic justification explain (or at least be compatible with) what is *distinctive* of epistemic justification. There is little in Enoch's work that explicitly addresses the third desideratum. Further, recall the case of Hallie that we set out in section 5.1. As this case shows, epistemic and ethical justification look like radically different creatures. This licenses initial suspicion that an account like Pragmatic, which seeks to ground the sources of basic epistemic justification partly in ethical norms, will struggle to satisfy this desideratum. We argue that this initial suspicion is warranted: Pragmatic should be rejected precisely because it is incompatible with a central distinctive feature of epistemic justification. This is a feature that we call *Truth-Directedness*.

5.3.1 Truth-Directedness

Recall the case of Hallie and the demon. The demon will torture every sentient being if Hallie ceases to believe that she sounds exactly like Journey's Steve Perry when she sings "Don't Stop Believin' " in the shower. As we emphasized, this fact *fails* to provide epistemic justification for Hallie's continuing to believe that her singing voice sounds like Steve Perry's. A compelling explanation of this failure is that this fact about the consequences of Hallie's belief is wholly unconnected to the *truth* of the proposition that her singing voice sounds like Steve Perry's. If this diagnosis is right, it suggests that any adequate explanation of the sources of basic epistemic justification will need to appeal in a central way to some link between those sources and true belief.

We endorse a specific, although highly schematic, account of this link:

> **Truth-Directedness** The sources of basic epistemic justification have the content that they do (in part) because of some positive connection between those sources and the truth of the beliefs that they govern.

Note that, as the "(in part)" locution suggests, Truth-Directedness provides only a necessary condition: it is compatible with there being further conditions that a source of basic epistemic justification needs to satisfy. We now clarify three elements of this thesis: the appeal to truth, to explanation ("because"), and to positive connection.

First, in adverting to *truth*, we do not intend to commit ourselves to a specific account of truth. To see this, note that one could restate our thesis (more clumsily) in terms of a positive connection between (a) belief that P and (b) P. Many philosophers with a range of views about truth—both substantive and minimalist—should find this thesis attractive.

Second, the thesis asserts that the connection between the truth and the sources of basic epistemic justification must be *explanatory*. The thesis is thus a constraint on theories that purport to *explain why* something is a source of basic epistemic justification. According to Truth-Directedness, all such theories must advert to some positive connection to truth as a criterion. Consider an example where this connection fails: a crude epistemic divine command theory. This theory states that a belief-forming mechanism's being a source of basic epistemic justification is grounded in God's commanding you to treat it as basic. This theory violates the explanatory requirement of Truth-Directedness. Note that even if God in fact ensured that the sources he commanded you to rely on are reliable, the link to truth thereby secured is not part of this theory's account of *what explains* why something is a source of basic epistemic justification. We think that the fact that this theory violates Truth-Directedness is one sufficient explanation of why this theory fails as an account of epistemic justification.

Crucially, Truth-Directedness is a demand on the *theory* that explains epistemic basicness, not on the basic sources themselves. Truth-Directedness thus does not require that a source of basic epistemic justification must "have truth as a goal." For example, conceptual competence with the concept AND does not obviously involve having truth as a goal, any more than competence with the concept TONK does. This is compatible with a theory of the sources of basic epistemic justification saying (for example) that our competence with the former, and not the latter, is a source of basic epistemic justification, in part *because* the first concept is truth-preserving while the second is not.[11]

[11] This simple proposal is intended only as an illustration. Perhaps, as Schechter and

Third, Truth-Directedness requires *some positive connection* between the sources of basic epistemic justification and truth. We intend this thesis in a very ecumenical spirit. Thus, some epistemologists might understand the positive connection in modal terms: for example in terms of reliability or safety. Others might flesh it out in terms of the constitutive goals of epistemic agents, or in terms of conditions for responsible pursuit of the truth. Still others might appeal to conditions for the possibility of the pursuit of truth, or on pursuing the truth efficiently.

To underscore the ecumenical spirit of our thesis, consider three more examples of controversial theses that Truth-Directedness is compatible with, but distinct from. First, some philosophers are attracted to the idea that *belief* "aims at the truth" in some interesting sense.[12] If combined with the thought that the epistemic norms are the constitutive norms of belief, this sort of approach could be developed into an appropriately truth-directed grounding account of the sources of basic epistemic justification. Second, Selim Berker (2013) argues against a view that he calls "epistemic teleology," which combines Truth-Directedness with the assumption that "directedness" should be construed as a promotion relation, and that the goods to be promoted can be aggregated. The thesis defended here is compatible with either accepting or rejecting these further assumptions.

Third, *pragmatic encroachment about knowledge* is, roughly, the view that whether a given body of evidence suffices to put a subject in a position to know that P can depend upon the practical stakes involved in the agent's relying upon P in their practical deliberation. Critics of pragmatic encroachment about knowledge sometimes appeal to claims similar to Truth-Directedness. However, the Truth-Directedness of epistemic justification is compatible with the most influential defenses of pragmatic encroachment about knowledge (e.g. Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005; Fantl and McGrath 2009). Distinguish two issues: (1) when a token source of evidence provides (at least some) justification for believing that P vs. (2) the threshold of justification required for knowledge, or for adequately epistemically justified belief. Standard views of pragmatic encroachment address the second issue, but we intend Truth-Directedness to be a thesis about the first.[13]

Enoch (2006: 705) worry, direct appeal to truth-preservation in this example is objectionably reliabilist. That would not count against Truth-Directedness, because there are multiple ways of making good on Truth-Directedness that are not reliabilist. See section 5.4 for discussion.

[12] For some of the different takes on how to best understand the idea that "belief aims at the truth" see Velleman (2000), Wedgwood (2002), Shah (2003), and Gibbard (2008).

[13] For example, all of the philosophers cited above appeal to (roughly) the claim that if one knows that P, one can rationally rely on P in one's practical reasoning. Mark Schroeder (2012) offers an additional rationale for pragmatic encroachment,

As the discussion above makes clear, Truth-Directedness is a *highly* schematic theory in the foundations of epistemology. This indeterminacy might seem objectionable, but it is not. Rather, it is dialectically crucial. Disputes between the sorts of approaches mentioned above are central to contemporary epistemology. Truth-Directedness is intended to be powerfully ecumenical, in virtue of being compatible with all of these approaches. Indeed, we take *commitment* to something like Truth-Directedness to be close to common ground in many parts of epistemology. Thus, when epistemologists seek to explain the foundations of epistemic justification, they often predictably advert to similar theses. Here is one representative example, from Paul Moser:[14]

> Epistemic justification is essentially related to the so-called cognitive goal of truth, insofar as an individual belief is epistemically justified only if it is appropriately directed toward the goal of truth.
>
> (Moser 1985: 4)

This is not to say that Truth-Directedness is uncontroversial (see, prominently, Wright 2004 on entitlement). However, the presumption of something like Truth-Directedness is so entrenched that it can be hard for even a radical to put it into question. For example, Stephen Stich reports that, when philosophers first confronted his heterodox argument that truth should *not* be the aim of our epistemic practices, many of them simply "assume[d] I must be joking, or propounding silly skeptical puzzles" (1990: 101).[15]

There is a powerful explanation of the strength and breadth of endorsement of theses similar to Truth-Directedness. As we have noted, epistemic justification appears both to be substantively normative and (as the example of Hallie shows) very different from ethical justification. Truth-Directedness promises to explain both of these features. On the one hand, the link to truth is distinctive: for example, there does not appear to be a parallel

arguing that even if only evidence constitutes reason to believe, pragmatic considerations can enter into an account of knowledge by providing reasons to suspend judgment. Neither of these rationales can easily be adapted to an account of the sources of basic epistemic justification. Note, however, that if one combined pragmatic encroachment with the view that the evidence that constitutes a subject's justification for belief just is that subject's knowledge, pragmatic encroachment on knowledge would also infect prima facie justification. Such a combination is *not* compatible with Truth-Directedness.

[14] See Berker (2013: §3) for dozens of endorsements by epistemologists of similar (often stronger) theses about the relationship between epistemic justification and truth.

[15] We take Stich's radical challenge to be significant. We set it aside here, however, because addressing it would require an entirely distinct sort of argument.

constraint on our ethical norms.[16] On the other hand, the substantiveness of epistemic normativity can potentially be explained in part by appeal to the intrinsic or instrumental significance of true belief.[17]

Truth-Directedness also helps to address an important challenge that Enoch poses to those philosophers (such as ourselves) who want to reject his account of epistemic justification, but who also want to preserve the role of *explanatory indispensability* in epistemic justification. The challenge is to identify a principled distinction between those kinds of indispensability that can justify belief, and those that do not (2011b: 67). Truth-Directedness provides the tools needed to accomplish this task.

Truth-Directedness is a *constraint* on candidate vindicating theories, and not a vindicating theory itself. It is thus compatible with many different ways of seeking to vindicate the sources of basic epistemic justification (for example). However, we know what attempts to vindicate inference to the best explanation (IBE) within a truth-directed framework would look like. This is because the overwhelming majority of the literature on the vindication of IBE presupposes something like Truth-Directedness. For example, Peter Lipton (2004: ch. 11) and Igor Douven (2011: §3) assume without comment that a "justification" of IBE (i.e., roughly, a vindication) will show that IBE is "truth-tropic" or reliable. And the discussion above suggests alternative accounts that appeal to epistemic responsibility or virtue, or to transcendental conditions on the pursuit of truth. Fully developing any such theory would be no small task. But that is not our goal. Our aim here is to explain how, with Truth-Directedness in hand, one can have confidence that explanatory indispensability could be vindicated as a source of basic epistemic justification, even if deliberative indispensability is not.

In this subsection, we have introduced Truth-Directedness, and made what we take to be a strong initial case for its plausibility. To sum up: it is intuitively plausible; it is ecumenical concerning many central controversies in epistemology; and it promises to explain the distinctive normativity of epistemic justification. This is the first half of our case for this thesis. The next section completes that case, by sketching three counterexamples to Pragmatic, and arguing that Truth-Directedness can well explain why these cases are powerful objections to Pragmatic.

[16] Compare Alston (2005): Alston abandons the idea that there is a single category of epistemic justification. Still, he is able to characterize various features as *epistemic desiderata* in large part because all of them are in some way or another truth-directed.

[17] One example: the central "problem of normativity" in contemporary knowledge-centric epistemology is arguably to explain why knowledge is relevantly better than mere true belief, *given* that truth is the fundamental normative currency of epistemology. Cf., e.g., Sosa (2007: Lecture 4).

5.3.2 Three Cases against Pragmatic

Enoch's accounts of intrinsic and instrumental indispensability are intended to be *capacity-relative* (note Enoch's judicious use of "to us" language at 2011b: 70–1). This means that, on Enoch's account, the sources of epistemic justification that are basic for us may not be basic for a creature with quite different capacities. For example, sense perception would not be instrumentally indispensable to a god-like being who had direct intuitive epistemic access to the complete nature of reality. And so, on Enoch's account, it would not count as a source of basic epistemic justification for such a being. We think that this assumption of capacity-relativity is essential to the plausibility of Enoch's account: why should instrumental indispensability *for some other sort of creature* determine what we have reason to believe? However, this feature of the account also makes it vulnerable to our first two counterexamples.

5.3.2.1 Case One: Sparky and Sally

Suppose that ingenious artificial intelligence researchers have designed an AI ("Sparky") capable of having full-fledged beliefs about the world. Sparky is epistemically similar to an ordinary person ("Sally") in the following respects: Sparky's capacities (and limitations) with respect to memory and to reasoning processes that conclude in belief are identical to Sally's. Further, across Sally's whole life, Sparky has been rigged up to Sally so that Sparky receives exactly the sensory evidence that Sally does. We stipulate just one crucial difference between Sally and Sparky. Perhaps Sparky does some things that count as actions, but unlike Sally, Sparky is simply incapable of deliberating about what to do.[18]

Plausibly, at any given time in Sally's adult life, Sally and Sparky share (very nearly) the same total evidence. After all, they have been exposed to very nearly the same sensory evidence. Their memories are qualitatively nearly identical. Their senses are similarly connected to the very same

[18] One might question whether Sparky is genuinely possible. For example, on a standard functionalist account of psychology, a belief is a state that, inter alia, interacts with desires in certain ways. Functionalism would thus take a dim view of Sparky imagined as a "pure thinker" with beliefs but no desires. However, we insist only that Sparky lack the capacity for practical *deliberation* (as Enoch conceives of that capacity; 2011b: 70–3). This is compatible with Sparky possessing desires, because functionalists are paradigmatically happy to ascribe beliefs and desires to animals that lack sophisticated deliberative capacities of the sort Enoch's argument appeals to. This point, combined with the intuitive conceivability of a creature like Sparky, constitutes a strong case for Sparky's genuine possibility.

environment. And they have identical capacities and dispositions to form beliefs on the basis of these inputs.

Suppose further that, in light of their parallel capacities and circumstances, Sally and Sparky engage in *ethical reasoning* (that is: reasoning about which ethical claims are true) in exactly the same ways at exactly the same times: when Sally trusts some testimony, so does Sparky; when Sally finds a thought-experiment or principle intuitively compelling, so does Sparky, etc. So Sally and Sparky in fact accept all the same ethical propositions, on the same bases. For Sparky, of course, this reasoning has purely theoretical significance. In contrast, Sally's ethical reasoning is often a part of her practical deliberation: she often *acts* on the basis of her ethical conclusions.

This description makes it highly plausible that at any given time, Sally and Sparky are almost always justified to the same extent in believing the very same propositions.[19] There is one plausible exception: Sally will have plenty of introspective and memory evidence as of deliberating, which Sparky will lack, so she (unlike Sparky) will have many beliefs that are justified partly on this basis. However, it is hard to imagine this affecting how justified each of them is in accepting an ethical or metaethical claim. On Enoch's account, however, Sally has a rationally required project (practical deliberation) that Sparky lacks. So, Enoch's account suggests that Sally has some defeasible epistemic justification for believing that there are ethical facts that Sparky lacks. This, we submit, is *very* odd.

The force of the oddity can be illustrated by comparing our case to the more familiar "new evil demon" case introduced by Keith Lehrer and Stewart Cohen (1983). This case compares two agents who are "perspectival" duplicates: they have identical beliefs, apparent memories, and confront identical perceptual appearances. The difference between these agents is that the perceptual appearances which in the one agent arise from reliable sense perception are in the other the result of demonic illusion. There is strong intuitive pull to think that agents like these are also intuitively *justificational* duplicates, and that this constitutes a serious problem for reliabilist accounts of justification. While the case is powerful, justification "externalists" can potentially bite the bullet here, in part by appealing to their central arguments that causal or modal connection to the world are justification-conferring. Our case is more dialectically powerful than the new evil demon case, because it holds parallel *all* of the features—both "internal" and "external"— that contemporary epistemologists typically find relevant to epistemic justification. Indeed, the case is intended to

[19] Or, if epistemic permissivism is true, the same range of attitudes is permissible for each of them to take towards a given proposition. On epistemic permissivism, see White (2005).

isolate only the distinctive alleged source of epistemic justification entailed by Enoch's account.

However, this is exactly what makes Enoch's account so implausible. Sally is supposed to have justification for believing that there are ethical facts that Sparky lacks. But the only difference between Sparky and Sally is that Sally engages in a valuable activity that Sparky cannot engage in, and that activity would not be valuable if there were no ethical facts. It is very hard to see how this difference could make Sally more justified than Sparky. Thus, we claim, the case of Sparky and Sally is a counterexample to Enoch's theory.

5.3.2.2 Case Two: Declan

Next consider Declan, an ordinary agent who has never thought about metaethics. He has no beliefs about whether there are ethical facts, and if he thought about it, he would simply suspend judgment on the matter.[20] Enoch's account predicts that Declan—like us—has indispensability-grounded justification for believing that there are ethical facts. Now imagine that an evil demon temporarily eliminates Declan's capacity to deliberate (without his noticing), and does nothing else. On a straightforward reading of Enoch, Declan thereby has *less justification* for believing that there are ethical facts. But it is very odd to think that such a demon can alter Declan's epistemic situation simply by switching on and off this capacity. By contrast, there is nothing odd about a demon altering what Declan is justified in believing by altering his access to uncontroversial sources of basic epistemic justification. For example, if the demon eliminates Declan's ability to remember that P, this can undercut Declan's justification for believing that P.

5.3.2.3 Case Three: Marjorie

Marjorie has strong empirical evidence that her practical deliberation is not causally efficacious. This evidence suggests that she is in a science fiction dystopia, where, whenever she deliberates and decides what to do, certain diabolical scientists intervene, and prevent her intention from guiding her action. In fact, however, Marjorie is in a *different* science fiction dystopia, where the scientists interfere with her perceptual faculties, memories, and sense of self-control, but leave the connection between her decisions and actions untouched. Now consider the following de se belief: *the results of my practical deliberation have some chance of being causally efficacious*. It may be

[20] Does this imply that Declan is irrational, given Enoch's account? No. For deliberative indispensability provides only defeasible justification, and Declan could be in the presence of relevant defeaters.

possible to deliberate absent this belief.[21] However, this belief is plausibly instrumentally indispensable to practical deliberation in Enoch's sense: the central reasons that one has to deliberate would surely be radically undermined by the inefficacy of one's deliberation. This means that, on Enoch's account, Marjorie has indispensability-based basic justification for believing that her practical deliberations are causally efficacious.

This case exploits the fact that if deliberative indispensability provides basic justification for believing that there are ethical facts, it will also provide basic justification for believing ordinary contingent propositions. This is embarrassing for Enoch because beliefs like the one mentioned—which concern the distribution of contingent causal connections—seem paradigmatically amenable only to justification on the basis of empirical evidence.[22] Deliberative indispensability, however, appears to be an a priori mode of justification. On Enoch's account, Marjorie's empirical evidence has to *compete with and outweigh* her alleged deliberatively-based a priori evidence that she can affect the world via her practical deliberations. This is implausible.[23]

5.3.3 Why Enoch's Vindicating Account Fails

This puts us in a position to spell out our central objection to Enoch: Truth-Directedness is a constraint on vindicating accounts of the sources of basic epistemic justification, and Pragmatic violates Truth-Directedness. This is because the fact that the belief that P is indispensable to our deliberative projects bears no positive relationship to the truth of P. Indeed, Enoch never claims that it does. Rather, he appeals to a different normative significance for this belief: that it is indispensable to a rationally non-optional project. But, as we have emphasized in section 5.3.1, it is not enough for a vindicating account of the sources of basic epistemic justification to be normatively significant; such an account must also capture what is distinctive of epistemic justification. This, we have argued, requires compatibility with Truth-Directedness.

[21] Bratman (1987: 37–8) has offered counterexamples against the idea that ϕ-ing intentionally requires belief that one can ϕ. For example, someone recovering from paralysis might intentionally flex her hand behind her back, despite not knowing whether she is doing so, or indeed whether she is able to do so. If one is compelled by some cases, one should also allow that such an agent *could* deliberate about whether to flex her hand behind her back.

[22] We thank David Enoch for helping us to clarify the force of this case.

[23] It should be noted that, according to some views, there are cases of a priori justification of contingent claims (such as the claim *I am here now*). We are not convinced there are such cases. But note that even if there are such cases, the best explanations of their plausibility do not apply here.

The fact that Pragmatic violates Truth-Directedness explains the force of the three counterexamples just offered. Consider them in turn. The difference between Sparky and Sally is that Sally has an indispensable project that Sparky lacks. That may give Sally all sorts of ethical reasons. But it is instructive to compare Sally to Hallie: the demon's threat is unconnected to the truth of Hallie's belief in her golden voice, and that explains why the demon's threat does not epistemically justify. The instrumental indispensability of Sally's belief in ethical facts appears unrelated to the truth of Sally's belief in just the same way. In the second case: turning on and off Declan's capacity to deliberate about what to do does not affect what he is justified in believing, because this capacity does not add any connection (causal, modal, perspectivally relative, or otherwise) to the facts that was lacking in its absence. The distinctive feature of the third case is that Marjorie's relevant beliefs concern contingent facts about causal connections. Here, the implausibility of deliberative indispensability making a positive difference is well explained by our difficulty in understanding how there could be a relevant positive connection between (a) the deliberative indispensability of beliefs concerning such facts and (b) their truth. We take these highly plausible theoretical explanations of the force of the intuitive cases to augment the force of the cases themselves.

Further, in virtue of violating Truth-Directedness, Pragmatic offers inferior explanations of why some candidate sources of evidence are *not* basic justifiers.[24] For example, why *doesn't* reading tea leaves provide basic justification for beliefs about your fate? Here are two (schematic) candidate explanations: (1) the beliefs that result from standard methods of tea-leaf reading bear no positive relation to facts about your fate; (2) reliance on tea-leaf reading is not instrumentally indispensable to a rationally indispensable project. Both (1) and (2) seem *true*. (Although one can easily imagine a benighted soul whose fragile grasp on the shreds of meaning in his life required trust in the tea leaves). But (1) is intuitively a *much better* answer to our explanatory question than (2).

For another example, consider a case of active controversy in foundationalist circles: whether testimony is a source of basic epistemic justification. Pragmatic suggests that this controversy could be resolved in large part by determining whether reliance on testimony is instrumentally indispensable to an intrinsically indispensable project. It plausibly is: *living well with others* is plausibly an intrinsically indispensable project for creatures like us, and defeasibly trusting their testimony seems instrumentally indispensable to that project. But this seems like the wrong sort of consideration to settle

[24] We are indebted to Brad Cokelet for this point.

the outstanding debate about whether or not testimony is a source of basic epistemic justification.

Finally, note that it may be possible to come up with piecemeal replies to some of our counterexamples. However, we think this would be a losing strategy for the defender of Pragmatic. With Truth-Directedness in hand, we have a *recipe* for generating counterexamples to Pragmatic: construct cases where Pragmatic endorses as epistemically basic methods that lack plausible connection to the truth. Such counterexamples will be legion.[25]

One might object on Enoch's behalf here that practical deliberation *is* truth-directed. In particular, one might object that often, when we engage in practical deliberation, we deploy our rational capacities to answer the following (purportedly) factual question: what ought I to do? One might then take a page from another of Enoch's arguments (2011b: ch. 7), and suggest that we have reason to believe that our capacity for practical deliberation is in fact acceptably reliable, because evolution has fitted us to track something close to the ethical facts.

While this objection is initially seductive, it ultimately misunderstands either Enoch's view or our case against it. Truth-directedness does not merely require that a vindicating account point to a belief-forming method that in fact bears some positive connection to the truth (our example of the divine command theory of epistemic justification in section 5.3.1 satisfied that criterion). Rather, on our theory, a legitimate vindicating account must appeal to this positive connection to *explain why* something is a source of basic epistemic justification. As we have emphasized, Pragmatic simply does not do that. Because our argument here is directed against this explanatory theory, the question of whether the deliberative methods that theory endorses also *happen* to be in some sense positively connected to the truth is irrelevant.

We conclude that Pragmatic should be rejected. We have argued that it faces serious intuitive counterexamples. Further, this vulnerability to counterexample is well explained by the fact that Pragmatic violates a powerful constraint on vindicating accounts of the sources of basic epistemic justification, namely Truth-Directedness.

The failure of Pragmatic does not by itself show that no defensible vindicating account can be given that would underwrite Indispensabilism. Nor does it establish our more ambitious thesis: that Indispensabilism must be rejected. However, our argument against Pragmatic does provide the

[25] For another example that fits this recipe, see Cuneo's case for the instrumental indispensability of having a positive self-image (2012: 1064).

materials needed in order to extend our argument to both of these stronger conclusions. We now turn to that task.

5.4 ALTERNATIVE VINDICATING ACCOUNTS AND INDISPENSABILISM

As we saw in section 5.2, there are good reasons to seek a vindication of the sources of basic epistemic justification. To repeat, a vindication of those basic sources is, roughly, a non-epistemic explanation of why the sources are what they are, which upholds (rather than debunks or reforms away) our intuitive conception of the nature and importance of those sources. In the previous section, we argued that Pragmatic—Enoch's proposed vindicating account—should be rejected. In this section, we argue that there are strong reasons to think that our case will generalize to other attempts to vindicate Indispensabilism. The core reason is that deliberative indispensability appears unconnected to the truth. This means that those seeking to vindicate Indispensabilism face a dilemma. On the one hand, you can develop an account that aims to vindicate deliberative indispensability as a basic source of justification. But those accounts will—like Pragmatic—be inconsistent with Truth-Directedness, and thus, we claim, fail to provide an adequate account of epistemic justification. On the other hand, you can aim to provide a vindicating account of the sources of basic epistemic justification that is compatible with Truth-Directedness. Such accounts have some chance of vindicating norms of epistemic justification. But such accounts will not vindicate deliberative indispensability as a basic source. If sound, the dilemma provides good reason to think that Indispensabilism is false.

To begin, consider an example of the second horn of the dilemma. Alvin Goldman (2008) has recently suggested a view that treats reliabilism as (in our terms) a vindicating account of the sources of basic epistemic justification. For example, this account suggests that sense perception is epistemically basic *because*, in a relevant range of cases, the processes that link the world to perceptual states and thence to correlated belief are on the whole marvelously reliable. Such a reliabilist vindicating account of the foundations of epistemic justification is evidently compatible with Truth-Directedness. Indeed, reliabilism is one natural framework for *spelling out* a substantive justification–truth link. But this vindicating account is also hostile to Indispensabilism.[26] This example will generalize: similar

[26] One could of course here try to present an ambitious argument that deliberative indispensability is a reliable belief-forming method. We think that the prospects for such an argument are poor, and thus leave this possibility to the side for now, in order to streamline our main discussion.

considerations apply to possible vindicating accounts that emphasize alternative modal properties such as sensitivity or safety, rather than process reliability (cf. Nozick 1981; Sosa 1999; Roush 2007).

The force of the tension may appear less clear as we move away from modal approaches to satisfying Truth-Directedness. However, consider one of the most influential alternatives to such conceptions, which we will call "responsibilism" about epistemic norms.[27] On this way of thinking about epistemology, norms for epistemic justification are, or are grounded in, (some of the) norms that govern what is required to be a responsible epistemic agent (cf. Chisholm 1977; BonJour 1985; Greco 1990). On one variant, for a belief to be justified is just for it to have been formed by an *epistemically responsible* process. For example, on this sort of account, if I believe that P in virtue of carefully acquiring and assessing the evidence, which I reasonably find to strongly support P, I would be justified in believing P, even if this process is in fact unreliable.[28] Conversely, if I form my belief that P irresponsibly—e.g., on a whimsical hunch—I would not be justified, even if my whimsical hunches are in fact very reliable.[29]

The central question for this sort of approach is how to characterize an epistemically responsible process. It is no accident that many responsibilists in epistemology (including those cited above) advert to truth in explaining what epistemic responsibility amounts to. Think again about Hallie: her continuing to believe that she sounds exactly like Steve Perry when she sings "Don't Stop Believin'" would be highly *ethically* responsible, but a clear violation of her "epistemic duties," if such things exist. And the lack of (first-personally mediated) connection to the truth appears to be an excellent explanation of the latter fact. With this contrast in hand, it becomes very unclear how Indispensabilism could be vindicated as compatible with our fundamental epistemic duties.

It is worth emphasizing that not all responsibilists do advert to a connection to truth in explaining epistemic responsibility. For example, on one natural reading of Enoch, he is a responsibilist. On this reading, Pragmatic reflects an underlying conception of epistemic responsibility as requiring apt pursuit of our intrinsically indispensable projects. On this reading, our core argument in this chapter can be seen as illuminating the difficulties

[27] Another important group of approaches seeks to understand central epistemic categories like justification in terms of epistemically virtuous and vicious character traits (e.g., Montmarquet (1993); Zagzebski (1996); Sosa (2007); Greco (2010)). On these approaches, epistemic virtue tends itself to be understood either in modal or responsibilist terms (or both), leading to a very similar dialectic as in the text. Because of this, we do not discuss these approaches further here.

[28] Compare again the "new evil demon"-style cases.

[29] Compare BonJour's classic case of Norman the clairvoyant (1985: 41ff.).

facing attempts to characterize epistemic responsibility in a way that is inconsistent with Truth-Directedness.

These brief remarks demonstrate the challenges facing attempts to defend Indispensabilism by providing a vindication of the sources of basic epistemic justification. The pattern suggested by these cases makes it plausible that any vindicating account for the sources of basic epistemic justification will either fail to respect the Truth-Directedness constraint (and thus, we claim, fail to secure a link to genuine *epistemic justification*), or fail to support Indispensabilism.

Enoch's thesis that our intuitive commitments in practical deliberation are a basic source of evidence is highly controversial among foundationalists (contrast sources like sense perception, memory, and use of IBE). So if this source is going to get on to the list of basic sources, it needs to do so on *theoretical* grounds (Enoch's defense of Pragmatic is one such theoretical attempt). However, if we are right, Truth-Directedness is one of our central theoretical commitments concerning epistemic justification. This suggests that *any* theoretical attempt to vindicate Indispensabilism will need to involve quite radical reform of our understanding of epistemology. For example, one could reject Truth-Directedness as part of a broader meta-philosophical pragmatism. We think that our case for Truth-Directedness tells against such views. However, the dialectic here is notoriously murky, with very little that can be assumed as non-question-begging common ground. We are thus satisfied to say: Indispensabilism must be rejected, modulo meta-philosophical pragmatism or other similarly radical views.

5.5 ABANDONING INDISPENSABILISM

In this section, we briefly discuss three distinctive replies to our argument. These replies each target a central assumption of our argument: that deliberative indispensability arguments must focus on practical deliberation; that practical deliberation does not ground the ethical facts; and that indispensability arguments must deliver epistemic normativity. Exploring these replies helpfully illuminates the range of assumptions within which our argument operates. These replies are also instructive because each reply abandons Indispensabilism in some way, in order to defend a related thesis.

First, one might hope that the metaethical payoff of Enoch's project could be preserved, and our objection avoided, by the following variant on his argument. Begin by claiming that indispensability to the *epistemic* (or doxastic, or explanatory) project confers basic epistemic justification. Assume that the epistemic project is consistent with Truth-Directedness. (Whether it is depends on how one characterizes this project.) Then adapt Enoch's case for

the deliberative indispensability of belief in Robustly Real *ethical* facts, into a case for the indispensability of belief in Robustly Real *epistemic* facts for doxastic deliberation. This would permit a Truth-Directedness-respecting case for Robust Realism about the epistemic facts. The Robust Realist about *ethical* facts can now appeal to the epistemic as a companion in guilt: once we posit *some* normative facts (conceived of along the lines of Robust Realism), it might seem a small cost to take on commitment to *additional* normative facts, such as the *ethical* facts.[30]

Note that this argument abandons Indispensabilism. It grants Truth-Directedness, and seeks to find a variant of Enoch's argument that is compatible with the central points that we have made in this chapter. This argument is thus substantially less theoretically exciting that Enoch's. However, if it succeeded in defending Robust Realism about ethical facts, it would deserve substantial independent attention.

We doubt it succeeds, however, for at least two reasons. First, note that deliberation about what to believe is, famously, *transparent*: we focus on whether P, not whether we ought to believe that P. In light of this, it is not clear that belief in epistemic facts is indispensable to such deliberation, as the adapted argument requires. If the oracle tells you there are no epistemic facts, the project of settling what to believe still evidently has a central and valuable point. Second, if the companion in guilt is established, it might assuage worries about belief in Robustly Real ethical facts that stem from the alleged metaphysical peculiarity of those facts. However, it is not clear that it helps with the central challenge of this chapter. To see this, consider that the proposal says nothing about whether the justification of belief in ethical facts is consistent with Truth-Directedness. Here the proponent of this strategy faces a dilemma. If she claims that the justification of belief in ethical facts is inconsistent with Truth-Directedness, then our main argument in this chapter targets her position in the same way that it targets Enoch's. And if she claims that the justification of belief in ethical facts is consistent with Truth-Directedness, then her view is radically different from Enoch's, such that the central challenges that Enoch's account were meant to address will need to be addressed entirely anew.

A second important strategy for replying to our argument appeals to an ambitious form of constructivism about ethical facts. Suppose, for example, that ethical facts are determined by a certain privileged (and indispensable) process of practical deliberation. This could be used to deliver an account of our epistemic justification for belief in ethical facts that is entirely consistent with Truth-Directedness. The basic idea here is that the very process of

[30] See Cuneo (2007) for an extended case that many of the core challenges posed to positing ethical facts carry over to positing epistemic ones.

practical deliberation that commits us to the existence of ethical facts also functions to ground the existence of those facts. If this were the explanation for why this commitment constituted a source of basic epistemic justification, it satisfies Truth-Directedness.

This is a familiar attempt to make good on the Tempting Idea we mentioned in section 5.1. The challenges facing this view are equally familiar. Enoch himself has forcefully posed some of these challenges in his (2006 and 2011a). We cannot hope to assess this strategy here, but we do want to emphasize that this kind of constructivism about ethical facts does *not* underwrite Indispensabilism. This kind of constructivism supports a domain-specific claim about the metaphysics of ethics, rather than a global epistemic thesis about the significance of deliberative indispensability (which is what Indispensabilism is). Perhaps this suggested constructivist view—which is only about ethical facts in particular—is all that we should have wanted from the Tempting Idea to start with. If so, this brings out the poor fit between Indispensabilism and the intuitive idea it was supposed to underwrite.[31]

Finally, a third reply to our argument is to give up on the idea that deliberative indispensability gives us distinctively *epistemic* justification. Developed in this way, the Tempting Idea would be wholly compatible with the naturalistic criterion that we initially posed as its foil. For, on that criterion, we are *epistemically* justified in believing in ethical facts just in case they (or their reduction base) feature in our best explanations of scientifically respectable phenomena. Despite this compatibility, the third reply also comes at a certain cost. It would be interesting, for example, if we were *ethically* committed to the existence of Robustly Real ethical facts. But if this provides us with no evidence for their existence, the upshot could be a deep and potentially intractable conflict between the demands of practical and epistemic reason. This is an interesting possibility, but not a particularly attractive one.

Summing up, we think that each response that we have considered here faces significant challenges, and we are not hopeful about any of them. Thus,

[31] Notice that some philosophers drawn to the Tempting Idea have appealed to a similar idea with respect to a range of types of facts, such as facts about the nature of action, the self, or desire (e.g. Korsgaard (2009); Schapiro (2009)). Suppose that certain beliefs about some such facts were practically indispensable. Indispensabilism would then underwrite an inference from that indispensability to epistemic justification. Attempting to replace Indispensabilism with a "constructivist" rationale, however, requires finding an independent *metaphysical* argument that shows that the relevant facts are grounded in facts about some practical project (e.g., the project of practical deliberation). Such grounding claims will not be equally plausible for all types of facts. The crucial point about this alternative to Indispensabilism is that the defensibility of indispensability arguments for epistemically justified belief in a class of facts will stand or fall with the plausibility of a "constructivist" metaphysics for that class of facts.

although our main argument in this chapter is directed at Indispensabilism, we take our argument to have another upshot as well: it helps clarify the range of ways that one might seek to make good on the Tempting Idea that we started with, and underscores the significant philosophical burdens that one takes on in trying to do so.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has evaluated the prospects of the following thesis:

> **Indispensabilism** If a belief-forming method is indispensable to the project of practical deliberation, then that method is a source of basic epistemic justification.

One striking reason to be drawn to this thesis is that our commitment to the existence of ethical facts can seem to *arise from* their apparent deliberative indispensability, rather than from any role that they play in explaining scientifically respectable phenomena. A modest methodological conservatism enjoins us to try to uphold this etiology as justification-conferring. This is a scrupulously reasonable project. However, we have argued that it likely cannot be successfully accomplished.

The heart of our argument has been that in order to vindicate the epistemic credentials of Indispensabilism, one would need to show that it is compatible with what is distinctive of epistemic justification. We explored Enoch's sophisticated recent attempt to vindicate Indispensabilism, and argued that it falls well short. Our argument rested heavily on a characterization of (part of what) makes epistemic justification distinctive. According to this thesis, which we dubbed *Truth-Directedness*, the explanation of what makes something a source of basic epistemic justification must advert to a connection between that source and the truth of the proposition justified. This thesis attempts to bring out a fundamental difference between the norms of epistemic justification and those of practical justification, suggested at the start of the chapter by our example of Hallie and the demon. We argued that Enoch's defense of Indispensabilism violated Truth-Directedness. We then argued that Enoch's failure to successfully defend Indispensabilism is no accident: we have reason to be confident that similar challenges will plague other attempts to defend Indispensabilism. Finally, we discussed ways of attempting to appeal to deliberative indispensability in metaethics that abandon Indispensabilism.

Both Indispensabilism and Truth-Directedness share a substantive *foundationalist* assumption about epistemic structure. This is a significant limitation of our argument as developed here, because one can easily imagine

theses similar to Indispensabilism that eschew the foundationalist assumption. We conjecture that variants of Truth-Directedness could be used to raise very similar problems for these theses. However, we do not have the space to defend this claim here.

We would like to close by briefly underscoring some of the broader metaethical import our argument. First, consider the significance of this conclusion for the assessment of Robust Realism in metaethics. Enoch's deliberative indispensability argument is crucial to his case for Robust Realism. So, if this argument fails, one of the most interesting and innovative defenses of Robust Realism simply stops well short of the finish line. Beyond its central role in his positive case, the argument from deliberative indispensability plays two other major roles in Enoch's defense of Robust Realism. First, he uses the argument to defend Robust Realism against a common naturalist objection to non-naturalist metaethical views: given that (according to the relevant kind of non-naturalist) these ethical facts (or their reduction base) are not part of our best explanation of any scientifically respectable phenomena, we lack epistemic justification for believing in them.[32] Second, many philosophers have thought that non-naturalists will be forced to posit a special perceptual faculty for detecting ethical facts. The deliberative indispensability argument is supposed to allow Enoch to escape the need to do so. Without his argument from deliberative indispensability to turn to, Enoch's innovative responses to these challenges to Robust Realism are undercut. This leaves the Robust Realist about ethical facts still searching for solutions to these challenges.

Our assessment of Indispensabilism has metaethical significance that extends beyond the evaluation of Robust Realism. Many philosophers—including philosophers who advocate metaethical positions quite different from Robust Realism—have been attracted to some version of the Tempting Idea that we introduced at the start of this chapter. To repeat, this was the idea that the (putative) indispensability of belief in ethical facts for our practical projects—including, for example, the project of deliberating about what to do—can somehow justify our belief in such facts. If our argument in this chapter is right, then one of the clearest ways of making good on this idea, namely, Indispensabilism, should be rejected. Moreover, as we discussed in section 5.5, there are serious worries with some of the other salient ways that one might seek to make good on the

[32] It is important to note that Enoch's strategy is intended as an alternative to two common replies to this objection. The first is to insist that ethical facts in fact *do* play a role in the explanation of scientifically respectable phenomena. The second is that ethical facts themselves count as respectable explananda (even if not necessarily scientifically respectable). Enoch (2011b: 53) expresses skepticism about both of these replies.

Tempting Idea, e.g., by giving up on the idea that the sort of justification involved is genuinely *epistemic* justification, or by pursuing an ambitious constructivism about ethical facts.

To sum up, then, we have argued for three conclusions concerning the epistemic and metaethical significance of practical indispensability. First, we should reject Enoch's indispensabilist case for Robust Realism about ethical facts. Second, we should reject Indispensabilism in general: deliberative indispensability does not epistemically justify belief. Third, there are good reasons to be skeptical of the metaethical significance of deliberative indispensability, as well as practical indispensability more broadly.[33]

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