

Comments on Lota's *Questions for Uniqueness*
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OPA 2019

In this brief note I'd like to raise some observations, and one line of criticism, for Kenji Lota's argument from pragmatic encroachment against Uniqueness — the thesis that when presented with a body of evidence there is at most a single rational doxastic attitude an agent may take. In a spirit that is friendly to Lota's view, this note attempts to explore what the pragmatic component involved in epistemic rationality amounts to on Lota's account, and how it differs from alternative encroachment arguments.

Let me preface my main question by reviewing a central strand of Lota's argumentation, which is to show that the Uniqueness is untenable on grounds that epistemic rationality is not free of practical components. By *practical components*, Lota has in mind the body of *questions* that structure and direct one's inquiry, or pursuit of knowledge.

On the picture Lota advances, epistemically responsible inquiry (that is, rational update of beliefs in light of new evidence) is (at least sometimes) best understood as an instance of the more general structure of practical deliberation, given its sensitivity to bodies of questions around which our inquiry is organized. This question-sensitivity speaks against the Uniqueness since two epistemic agents in a given circumstance may appropriately update their beliefs differently in light of the same body of evidence if they are pursuing answers to distinct questions. Lota thus offers an argument for what is referred to in the literature as *pragmatic encroachment* on epistemic rationality.

There is however a striking difference between Lota's argument from question-sensitivity and previous ways of motivating pragmatic encroachment. Previous approaches often say too little about the *general* features of an epistemic agent's environment that are relevant to the assessment of their doxastic state. They instead locate specific instances of pragmatic considerations whose presence intuitively bear on how an agent should respond in their capacity as a knower. These features may include, among other things, an agent's moral commitments (See, e.g., Basu & Schroeder 2018, Fritz 2017).

Part of what makes Lota's argument distinctive and interesting is the level of generality at which it is locating the pragmatic elements that epistemic rationality is subject to: it is not the the content of a particular belief, nor the evidence itself, but the *inquiry* that fails to reflect Uniqueness. The generality of the account in this respect may however come at a cost. Namely, it no longer becomes clear how the questions that guide an agent's inquiry speak against Uniqueness. It is common in discussions of pragmatic encroachment to note that while we can exercise managerial control over how our gathering of evidence proceeds in light of the questions we care about, we cannot lack control over the belief formation process once we are confronted with evidence. Given this fact, it is therefore not clear how pragmatic components of epistemic rationality demonstrate the falsity of Uniqueness. In Lota's case, Pula and Lila might come to differing resolutions due to the differences in the upstream questions that shaped their respective inquiries. However, were we to hold these questions fixed, there could nonetheless be at most a single doxastic attitude rationally permitted in light of the evidence gathered. Questions presumably shape an inquiry prior

to the moment when an agent must revise their beliefs in light of the evidence they have. At this later stage, Uniqueness may hold even if there is pragmatic encroachment in how an inquiry was carried out.

Given the interesting and often nuanced points Lota makes, I look forward to hearing their reply and opening the floor to further discussion.