

## **Comments on Ross and Schroeder's "Belief, Credence, and Pragmatic Encroachment."**

Lara Buchak, UC Berkeley

### **SUMMARY**

*Pragmatic Credal Reductivism*: The level of confidence one must have in a given proposition to count as believing it depends on pragmatic factors.

*Reasoning Disposition Account*: Believing that p involves an automatic but defeasible disposition to treat p as true in reasoning.

Belief serves two competing ends in practical reasoning:

- (1) To allow the believer to arrive at a good conclusion
- (2) to prevent cognitive overload.

The rationality of belief can be understood in terms of these two ends. For example:

*Procedural Rationality Condition*: A set of beliefs is rational only to the extent that it is licensed by a rule or procedures that strike an optimal balance between minimizing expected cognitive costs and maximizing the expected value of the agent's deliberative conclusions.

Another way to understand the rationality of belief: "heuristics are justified pragmatically"

-- A belief that p is rational to the extent that the defeasible disposition it gives rise to (treat p as true in reasoning) is rational.

### **ADVANTAGES OF THIS ACCOUNT**

FIRST ADVANTAGE: Belief is not situation-dependent.

SECOND ADVANTAGE: Belief and degree of belief are distinct but both important to reasoning.

THIRD ADVANTAGE: Helps solve the "regress problem" in decision theory.

### **OBJECTIONS**

FIRST OBJECTION: How should we understand the rationality of belief?

PROCEDURES → BELIEFS → DISPOSITIONS

There are two things we might evaluate:

- (1) Whether the agent is following the optimal procedures for forming beliefs.
- (2) Whether it is optimal to have a disposition to treat a particular belief as true in reasoning.

Similarly, two places in which avoiding cognitive overload comes into the argument:

- (1) Deciding which beliefs to form.
- (2) Practical deliberation.

But these come apart!

SECOND OBJECTION: Although the standards for belief won't depend on the particular situation in which an agent finds himself, they may still depend on the situations that the agent finds himself in generally.

THIRD OBJECTION: Rationality of belief depends on pragmatic factors that in some cases may override the importance of the truth or falsity of the belief.