Tolerance as a Function of Moral Epistemology

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In liberal societies there is significant social and political pressure to maintain tolerance towards the members of one's community. Someone might say "you can't dislike people solely because they are different from you." However, when it comes to differing moral beliefs, difference means more. Where I should maybe tolerate any difference in taste; there is presumably no correct opinion for what ice cream flavor is the best. This is not the case for differences in moral beliefs or practices. When there is disagreement about morals it can have a significant effect on how we judge and treat others. For instance, a racist, xenophobic, or homophobic's beliefs are a part of the moral framework by which they judge others character. And consequently, how others judge their character. It is not controversial to say that as a community we shouldn't be tolerant of such opinions and the practices that they motivate. This highlights the main issue of tolerance, the unlimited tolerance 'paradox' formulated by Karl Popper, recapitulating a version of Plato's paradox of Freedom.

> Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them (Popper 1945).

While the need for tolerance is apparent there is a less obvious need to limit tolerance. How exactly we might differentiate the considerations which should factor into moral judgement and those which do not is the definitive question of tolerance.

This paper hopes to provide an insight into this issue by providing a metaethical analysis of tolerance. We can, I argue, make sense of Popper's problem, as well as many others, if we understand tolerance judgements as tracking the epistemic status of moral beliefs. Here is the principle I wish to defend, the **Epistemic Risk Principle:** one should be tolerant of those moral acts and beliefs when one does not have significant epistemic justification for the wrongness of such acts or beliefs. This account aligns well with what I take to be the liberal sentiments concerning tolerance as well as the technical issues involved in making sense of it. In the first section of this paper I am going to present the distinctions and issues necessary to understand the current theoretical situation regarding tolerance. Following this, I will present my case for the epistemic analysis of tolerance. Lastly, I discuss what the analysis reveals about the relationship between individual and society level tolerance judgements and whether or not the prescriptions made, make sense.

Section 1: Issues Facing a Theory of Tolerance

To center the conversation I am going to proceed through what I hope to be intuitive applications of the concept of tolerance. There are a few ways in which people are tolerant/intolerant of certain beliefs and acts. Here is a non-exhaustive list: at the individual level, one might go out of their way to stop certain practices; one might actively discriminate in who they employ or who they would be employed by; one might not associate with people with certain characteristics. At the societal level there might be laws in place that forbid certain practices; there might be laws that discriminate against people who have certain practices or beliefs; or, on the other end, there might be legal protection of certain practices and beliefs.

Toleration of religious beliefs is a prime example of the common practice of tolerance. In fact, it is a protected class in the United States, meaning not only is it not discriminated against at the legal level, it is illegal to discriminate against one's religious beliefs and practices in many circumstances. There are also examples of acceptable intolerance; the obvious case being murder. There would be no backlash for being intolerant of a murderer, nor refusing to associate with someone who believes murder is an acceptable practices. There is also plenty of laws that specify punishments for murder and arms of the government meant to interfere and discentivize with act of committing murder.

Speaking of the attitudes towards murder as intolerant may sound a little silly. We normally talk about tolerance with tacit acceptance of the boundaries set by the current social conditions. Right now, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender are most of the topical areas of tolerance. In 18th century America the practice of slavery was a issue. Perhaps in Rome, in the 3rd through 1st Centuries BCE, people talked about whether or not they should tolerate human sacrifice.[1] In general, there is no reason to assume a structural difference in the reasoning between tolerating murder tolerating say, racism. Since, at bottom, both are motivated by similar attitudes of moral disapproval. They are wrong because of the harm they cause, or the individual rights they infringe upon, or perhaps they go against some absolute duty. And being wrong is the motivation for being intolerant of them. It is the same form of argument in both cases. In Section 1.2 I will speak more on what this argument form looks like.

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[1] The Roman Senate eventually outlawed human sacrifice in 97 BCE. By this time though, the practice had fallen so far out of favour that the law was mostly symbolic (Carver, Watson, and Curtiss 2018).

Section 1.1 The Conception of Tolerance as Distinctly Moral Tolerance

John Rawls makes the distinction between a concept and a conception: a conception is some ideological role and the concept is some specific account that fills that role (Rawls 1971). For instance, we have a conception of the good. And philosophers have produced many concepts to account for what exactly is playing the role of the good (e.g.pursuing happiness, fulfilling duties, etc.) The conception unites those who might disagree on what exactly is playing the role. Moral theorists might find common agreement in the fact that something needs to be accounted for and the boundaries of that conception; i.e. the examples, intuitions, and principles that a successful analysis needs to follow and/or make sense of. Even the skeptic can agree to the boundaries of some conception but simply deny any concept rises to the occasion.[2] In trying to establish the concept of tolerance I want to first talk about how broad the conception should be construed. Arthur Applebaum argues that the mark of a good conception is being as broad as possible while still being useful (Applbaum 2010, pg. 216-17). However, I am not going to draw the boundaries of the conception of tolerance as broadly as possible and I hope it becomes clear why shortly.

I want to start first with a definition provided by Peter Nicholson. On his view, tolerance is "the virtue of refraining from exercising one's power to interfere with other's opinion or action although that it deviates from one's own over something important and although one morally disapproves of it" (Nicholson 1985 p.162). The use of the word 'tolerance' in everyday circumstances is significantly broader than Nicholson's definition. People can be tolerant of things one morally disapproves of but they can tolerate music they don't like or a putrid smell or an uncomfortable chair. So the question is whether or not to consider tolerance as including both moral and non-moral attitudes.

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[2] First, it is important to note that this distinction does not just apply to moral philosophy but philosophy as a whole. We often have some conception that requires an analysis or reduction or explanation. We then produce specific concepts to provide one or more of those things. We also argue about the boundaries of that conception as well, discussing what would count as a valid analysis, reduction, or explanation. Here's another example for those not familiar with the concept/conception distinction. Consider the conception of *de re* modality. A successful account will have to meet certain criteria: the account will have to say that it is possible for me to be typing in my bed instead of at my kitchen table, it is not possible that I could've been a lobster, etc. It will also have to explain *why* these things are possible/impossible.These are some of the boundaries of the conception of *de re* modality that a concept will be measured against. There are also open questions about those boundaries.. For instance, whether modality is epistemological or metaphysical or whether there is such a thing as *de re* modality at all (you could deny its existence like Quine). For the most part however, agree that the boundaries exist, even if we disagree on the specific concepts that fill the role of that conception e.g. counterpart theory vs. a propositional account vs. a semantic account.

The first option, to lump together the tolerance of things both disliked and disapproved of, will be called the weak conception of tolerance, following (Warnock 1987, pg. 125). The strong conception of tolerance conceives only those instances where one is tolerating acts one morally disapproves of as actual tolerance. I will be restricting my discussion to the strong conception. I make this restriction not because of any deep moral beliefs or arguments concerning the distinction but for practicality. It does not seem to be that both can be accounted for by the same framework, since the attitudes we take towards tolerating differing moral beliefs and acts differ significantly from those we take towards tolerating things we merely dislike. For instance, were I to allow country music to be played in my car even though I despise country music, I would be considered tolerant according to the weak conception. I might do so to make my passengers comfortable but I would not be doing wrong to prohibit such music. While on the other hand, prohibiting acts that one finds morally objectionable can, by my intuition, be morally wrong (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) Further, this difference is reason enough to distinguish the strong and the weak conceptions.I am agnostic on whether both toleration of moral and non-moral things should be considered a virtue. But these differences support differing treatments. And I am not able, in this paper, to produce an analysis of both.

Some philosophers have found it dubious that tolerance can be restricted in this way to purely moral disapproval: "[the distinction] between the moral and the non-moral, rest[s] on the presumption that the moral is rational, or subject to argument, the non-moral a matter of feeling or sentiment" (Warnock 1987, p.126). Warnock's main issue, the supposition of moral attitudes being rational and non-moral ones being irrational is moot since I say nothing about the toleration of non-moral acts or beliefs. I take the assumption that moral attitudes are rationally revisable and open to reflective investigation.

One more boundary of the conception of tolerance I am taking for granted is the distinction between tolerance and indifference. We often falsely equivalate the two in ordinary language. I cannot be indifferent to something and, at the same time, tolerate it. Tolerating some act or belief implies that one disapproves of that act or belief. Often with questions of sexual preference and race there is a call for tolerance, but this is not really what we are looking for. Tolerance doesn't necessitate a belief change, merely a change in how one acts towards the object of tolerance. What we are really looking for with regard to race and sexual preference is indifference. We are not looking for these groups to merely be tolerated, which would allow one to maintain their prejudiced beliefs while not acting on them, but for people to have complete indifference towards these aspects.

In light of this close relationship, there is reason to consider whether or not calls tolerance can be reduced to a critique of the beliefs one holds. Perhaps, when we call for tolerance, what we really want is people to change their beliefs. This position can be motivated by tolerance being a suboptimal circumstance, since no one wishes to be merely tolerated (Horton 1998; Fletcher 1998). Obviously, if this were the case, there would be no virtue of tolerance. This is a precarious account of tolerance, one that can only work if you believe that anytime there is moral disagreement, one or both of the participants has unreasonable beliefs. Since, if there is a need for tolerance anytime there is moral disagreement, which seems like a reasonable expectation, then moral disagreement implies someone must have an unreasonable moral belief. I doubt this will be acceptable to many readers as it implies first, a form of moral absolutism and second, that all reasonable people agree. The latter being in direct tension with my experience of the world and I assume yours as well. This elucidates two aspects of tolerance: (1) Calls for tolerance cannot be reduced to calls for reasonable beliefs and (2) It is possible that reasonable people have moral disagreements. It will be necessary to explain why one should be tolerant of what they reasonably believe to be morally bad acts or beliefs. Providing such an explanation is the main litmus test for the success of a theory of tolerance.

Section 1.2: Is Tolerance Even A Virtue?

There is an open question as to how tolerance can count as virtue. At first glance, it seems like an odd policy. How could it be a moral virtue to tolerate some acts which one finds morally objectionable? If they are morally objectionable then it would seem that agents should take every chance to prevent those actions from being commited -- doing so would merely be stopping the bad actions. However, at the same time, without some tolerance it seems that modern multicultural societies would immediately fall into moral factions, each of which is trying to stop the others from living their life the way they believe is right.

This is why Bernard Williams calls tolerance "necessary and impossible" (Williams 1998, pg. 18). Necessary because if any one social group were able to implement all their moral views into law, it seems that we'd inevitably create division and resentment -- especially in societies like ours where what is morally wrong according to some is morally required according to others. Impossible because tolerance seems to require going against some moral duty to try to stop bad acts from happening. Consider two propositions, call them (M) and (I).

>   (M): X is morally bad.
>   (I): I should be intolerant of X.

The truth of (I) is at least dependent on the truth of (M) under normal circumstances.[3] Consider a very simple argument: Premise 1A: Murder is morally bad. Conclusion: I should be intolerant of murder. This argument form is obviously open to counterexamples when we consider the variety of things people consider morally bad. Example: Premise 1B: Homosexuality is morally bad. Conclusion: I should be intolerant of homosexuality. But it is not apparent what further premises we could add to the Murder argument to make it valid. Every proposition I immediately consider when trying to make this argument cogent is either equivalent to (M) or reasons why (M) is true: being intolerant of murder will reduce harm; being intolerant of murder will save lives, etc. The first problem of tolerance is this: Why is this argument form invalid and what premises can be added to make it valid?

Thomas Scanlon offers a first order reason why tolerance is a virtue at the societal level: "rejecting [tolerance] involves a form of alienation [from one's fellow citizens]" and "given that there must be disagreements, and those who disagree must somehow live together, is it not better, if possible, to have these disagreements within a framework of mutual respect?" (Scanlon 1998, pg. 231, 234). I agree with Scanlon that these are good reasons to be tolerant, but his account does not go far enough in accounting for specific instances of tolerance. We obviously wouldn't/shouldn't show respect some group that believed murder was an acceptable act. There is no call for mutual respect of others' moral beliefs in this case of racism. The issue in accounting for tolerance is that one must be able to draw some distinction between those moral acts which should and should not be tolerated. And there is not an obvious way to do so just through mutual respect of other members of the same body politic.

Considering respect as the basis for toleration only functions insofar as a set moral beliefs doesn't prohibit such respect towards other groups. As discussed prior, there are some beliefs that should not be tolerated and were some groups hold those beliefs, it is not clear how a framework of mutual respect would be helpful in alleviating the tension of moral disagreement. I don't take Scanlon to be implying that we should be respectful of all moral beliefs (if he were then we would run into Popper's problem) but that our judgements about what we should tolerate should take into account a need for mutual respect. This account is underspecified. It is not obvious that I should have mutual respect for the practices of the Klu Klux Klan and if I shouldn't have mutual respect for them, why shouldn't I? It seems to me that it might be morally bad to respect the beliefs and practices of the KKK, let alone tolerate them. Generalizing from my own personal beliefs into possible moral conflicts,

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[3] Perhaps you can manufacture an example wherein if you are intolerant of some unrelated X, you can save 5,000 children from dying in a bus accident. In this case the truth of (I) might not be dependent on (M). However, I hope you'll grant that this is not a normal circumstance and when it comes to normative judgements, it will be the case that the truth of (I) and (M) will be related.

there are plenty of moral frameworks that disallow mutual respect towards certain groups. For instance, asking for mutual respect will fall on deaf ears when talking to a religious zealot. So though mutual respect seems like a solid reason for tolerance, it is obviously not the end of the conversation. A complete account will take into consideration reasonable but differing attitudes towards the acts and practices of varying people with the goal of delimiting the boundaries of tolerance in a way that aligns with our intuitions about what cannot be tolerated.

There also seems to be a distinct kind of tolerance that is embodied at the individual level. For example, someone might always seek to increase individual legal freedom while at the same time being extremely intolerant in their personal lives. Say, going out of their way to interfere with people's religious, social, and sexual practices. This does not seem to give rise to the issue that society will collapse into factions but it will still strike many as wrong.

This paper hopes to answer the question of how at the political and personal levels tolerance can be a virtue. I believe there are differing normative rules regarding these two different dimensions of tolerance. It seems to me that what one tolerates at the individual level is a lot less strict than what one tolerates at the political level. Specifically because enacting a law, using coercive force against some individuals for certain acts requires stronger justification than intolerance at the individual level.

There is one more issue that creates tension within the concept of tolerance: how non-subjective normative standards should be generated from personal moral frameworks. It is a precondition to the discussion of tolerance that there exists differences in what people approve/accept. If you accept some form of moral realism the question of tolerance is purely a practical question, since in a perfect world everyone would only believe in those moral propositions that are true and there would be no space for disagreement. And thus no need for such a virtue of tolerance.

Since the question facing us considers what to do in the case of disagreement there is only space for person-centered considerations. That is, start with the personal level disagreements not with an account of moral judgement or other things one might take to be moral facts.This immediately causes problems, since, personal level moral attitudes seem to only generate reasons for intolerance. Since an agent with belief that some act is wrong has no immediate reasons to allow such acts. In fact, believing some act is wrong can generate reasons for interfering with such acts. For instance, if you are witness to an ongoing assault, if you can stop the act (safely) then you have a moral reason to. John Hortan muddies the issue in describing the difference between religious and racial tolerance:

"Tolerance can allow the possibility of peaceful harmonious coexistence without compromising the integrity of reasonably held beliefs. Typically, the case of race is different. It is not tolerance toward different races that we generally wish to promote by the recognition of the intrinsic moral irrelevance of racial differences."

I think the sentiment here is correct but the difference cannot be stated in such direct terms. Since, both in the case of race and the case of religion, agents hold moral attitudes towards members of the other group. But in justifying tolerance one cannot appeal to objective states such as the irrelevance of race in moral judgement since the racist would strictly deny the statement that race was irrelevant to the judgement of moral character. This gets back to needing some objective standard that at the same time keeps an eye on the subjective moral framework of the agents doing the acting.

Section 2: Tolerance as a Function of Moral Epistemology

There are two ways one might couch the difference in moral beliefs between cultures and individuals. First, you might argue that morals are pluralistic; there can be multiple different, yet equally adequate sets of moral beliefs. If we construe moral disagreement as differences in equally sufficient moral values the issues are not only a practical problem but a theoretical one, it runs deep. Conceiving of moral differences in a pluralistic framework comes with its own set of problems (Herman 1998; Graham 1998). Problems that will not be discussed here, since this is not the strategy I will be pursuing. I merely want to couch moral disagreement in terms of a practical problem of moral disagreement.

For my argument to function I have to assume that we can be justified in our (some of) moral beliefs. For instance, we are justified in believing that unnecessary homicide is morally bad. And having a certain skin color or sexuallity is morally neutral or irrelevent. It is not necessary, however, to assume what specifically grounds those moral facts or justifies our belief in them, though I do believe this account to be in conflict with some wholly pluralistic view of morality or epistemology. And while I do think it will not be popular for this reason, I think it can add a valuable addition to the philosophical tool box. Even if one is pluralistic about most moral truths, you might think some are generated anytime a community is formed; say, restraining from murder. In that case, my account can still function. I will discuss what my account minimally requires at the end of Section 3.1.

Section 2.1: How Justification Features in Toleration Judgements

I want to say more about what I take justification in this context to mean. I take it that while truth is not (definitely) degree sensitive, justification is (Woudenberg 2016). For instance, take my belief in the proposition "It is going to rain today." Compare three pieces of evidence for that belief. 1) A friend told me they think it is going to rain today and they are usually right. 2) I watched the weather forecast, and they are almost always right. 3) I am currently watching it rain out my window. The degree of justification increases from one example to the next. Next, for propositions that are wholly or partially justified by other propositions, the degree to which they are justified cannot be greater than the propositions they are justified by.

We needn't always act in line with our beliefs. In fact, we often don't. Though most of the literature here has been focused on akrasia (weakness of will), an action can also reasonably act contrary to a belief. For instance, say you are giving an important talk at Cocke hall this afternoon and there is <5% chance that it is going to rain on your walk there. You can be completely reasonable in holding the belief that it is not going to rain on you, while at the same time bringing an umbrella, because the risk of showing up to your talk drenched is not worth it.Here's another example, one more analogical to the account that will be presented: Say you are justified in a belief that Eliud Kipchoge's odds to win the olympic marathon are 2-1. What's more, you were offered a bet at 10-1 odds. You reasonably believe this to be a fantastic deal and justified bet to make. But given you're tight on money this month, the risk is not worth it and you refrain from handing money to your bookie.[4]

In these cases you are, in a sense, going against your belief that it will not rain on you; doing extra work (lugging an umbrella) for what you believe will not amount to any benefit, since you don't believe it will rain on you. However, in an all-things-considered state, lugging the umbrella is not unreasonable. This is a distinction between what Joseph Raz calls Practical and 'Adaptive' reasons.

> Reasons which are value-related are practical reasons, even if they are reasons for having a belief, or an emotion. Reasons are adaptive if they mark the appropriateness of an attitude in the agent independent of the value of having that attitude, its appropriateness to the way things are" (Raz 2007, 11).

In the first example there is no adaptive reason for carrying the umbrella, yet there is a strong practical reason to do so. In the second example there is a strong adaptive reason to make the bet, yet a stronger

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[4] Writing now post the Tokyo Olympics, Kipchoge has won the Marathon by over two minutes.

practical reason not to. When I talk about justification in this essay, I mean epistemic (adaptive) justification. It is important to note that Raz's use of 'value-related' does include all reasons that make reference to values. Rather, value-related refers to the value of some acting on some reasons vs. adaptive reasons that make reference to the state of affairs in the world. So, unintuitively, you might not do X because you believe it to be morally bad. This is an adaptive reason for not doing X. While you also might not do X, regardless of your belief in it being morally bad because it will have bad consequences. This is a practical reason for not doing X.

Surely though, if we are not willing to act on some proposition we adaptively believe then we don't actually have said belief? Or else, does this not rid belief of its moral weight? If it is possible to hold some belief but not act accordingly, maybe we should simply just raise the standard for belief altogether; if one doesn't have skin in the game, if there is nothing to lose regarding which beliefs you do or do not hold, then what function does belief play at all? Beliefs have an ethical weight simply because they are things we should act on. If they didn't Cliford's Principle regarding the ethics of belief that"[i]t is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence" would carry much less strength (Clifford 1877). Since, Clifford argues this principle is true simply because beliefs have consequences — they cause actions. I am not arguing that beliefs do not motivate action, merely that actions can be motivated (or demotivated) by multiple beliefs. The judgement on whether or not you should make the bet is motivated by the belief that it is a very good deal and demotivated by the belief that it would be financially irresponsible.

Now we are at the pivotal point in this analysis; describing how exactly we might conceive of toleration judgements as judgements of certainty weighted against risk. Let's restate the principle I said I would be arguing for, **Epistemic Risk Principle:** one should be tolerant of those moral acts and beliefs when one does not have significant epistemic justification for the wrongness of such acts or beliefs. Given that some moral belief is epistemically justified is not yet enough to justify intolerance of those acts and beliefs which go against that moral belief. If one is going to hold others to some moral standard, the justification for that standard must be greater than it merely being an epistemically justified belief. So, like in the case of your walk to Cocke hall, I want to say that sometimes risks outweigh the reward given there is not certainty in the moral beliefs. The risks of intolerance have been heavily discussed in the literature: alienating one's compatriots (Scanlon 1998); destroying valuable liberties (Cohen 1993); and sacrificing the social preconditions of well being (Harel 1998). Given these substantial and imminent risks, requiring a greater degree of adaptive justification for intolerance based on some belief, over and above the justification for the belief itself, is not unreasonable. There are similar risks in being tolerant of morally bad behavior, allowing harm can have all the same effects as

interfering in others' ways of life. So, when that higher standard is met for some moral proposition, not only is it not a virtue to be tolerant, it is a vice.

Let's consolidate the position. Some belief is reasonable just in case it is 'minimally justified' and it is minimally justified' if it meets the basic, non-value-related requirements for belief, whatever those may be.[5] Call some belief "risk justified" if there are strong adaptive reasons for believing it. Both the walking example and the betting example establish that minimal justification and risk justification are different standards. Sometimes the strength of the adaptive reasons (the degree of justification) needs to be significantly higher than merely believing it to be true to motivate an action. For instance, in the betting example if you thought that Kipchoge's chances were 100,000:1 the degree of certainty would exceed the threshold needed to overcome the practical reason that you might lose your money. In our case, when the degree of certainty meets the threshold it justifies intolerance. When acting on some belief day to day, it may simply be enough to be minimally justified since there are little or no risks involved. However, given the discussed potential harms of tolerance/intolerance, we must require some belief to be risk justified to be motivating. In conclusion, we are only justified in being intolerant when the belief that motivates that intolerance is also highly epistemically justified.

In considering the epistemic uncertainty of some agents' moral beliefs we can find the objective standard by which one can measure whether opposing beliefs should be tolerated that does not inherently disregard the agent's personal moral framework. Whether or not I agree with you, I can look at your moral framework, your evidence, and decide whether or not you are justified in some moral belief, and to what degree. That is, one can judge an agent's justification for certain propositions from an objective point of view even if one cannot judge their moral beliefs from that point of view.

Under this account, tolerance is a metaethical judgement about the certainty of one's moral beliefs. In cases of intolerance, I argue, it is a metaethical principle that you must have strong adaptive reasons for the belief that motivates that action since interfering/not interfering in others lives comes with the risks and consequences. It might be asked of me, doesn't surveying those risks and judging their severity require a value judgement? It would, but that is not a requirement of my analysis. The principle laid out here is only so specific as to require that there is *some* bar over and above minimal justification that the beliefs that motivate intolerant actions meet.

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[5] I will not in this paper take a stand on what exactly justifies a belief. I don't believe this account of tolerance to be in conflict with evidentialism, reliabilism, etc..

One might ask, how high should the bar must be set? Given that there are a multitude of reasonable beliefs, many of which contradict each other, the aim is to set the epistemic bar high for intolerance high enough that issues are few and far between. If we were to set the bar at certainty, then of course we would get no intolerance. But this goes against our intuition that actions and beliefs deserve intolerance: murder, racism, neglect etc. In the next section I want to discuss the epistemic status of two propositions that I think help establish where much epistemic justification is needed for intolerance as well as providing evidence for my account.

2.2 The Epistemic Status of Two Moral Propositions

While I assume an agent is more justified in the belief that murder is wrong than they are a number of other moral beliefs, I do want to briefly discuss why this is a safe assumption. Not only is belief "unnecessary homicide is morally bad" almost universal, you can pick your favorite moral framework and provide good reasons within that framework for the wrongness of unnecessary homicide. At the practical level, people can provide solid and numerous reasons for the wrongness of unnecessary homicide. I use 'unnecessary homicide' in place of 'murder' because that even if everyone agrees that murder is bad, they might disagree about what counts as murder. I'm only assuming we are highly justified in believing the proposition "unnecessary homicide is bad." So while I do not want to take a strong stand on how exactly moral epistemology functions, I am relying on the fact that we have strong epistemic justification for believing unnecessary homicide is bad. Meaning, that we are justified in acting intolerantly towards it.

Going in a more controversial direction, let us talk about the epistemic status of moral beliefs related to religious toleration. The second of the ten commandments prohibits idolatry:the worship of other gods. If one believes that commitment of this sin can only end with the damnation of one's eternal soul, that there is a good reason to be intolerant of belief in other gods. You are saving your neighbor from that damnation. However, beliefs concerning which god is the right god are variable. For instance, the chance that you believe in some specific god is sensitive to the location you were born in, the religion of your parents, your education, i.e. culture. This combined with the fact that all propositions concerning any specific god's existence are unverifiable puts those beliefs in a shakier epistemic position. This is not to say that one is unreasonable for believing such propositions, just that one should recognize that one's certainty of such propositions is low.[6] Belief being sensitive to

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[6] I think many religions recognize this fact. In the Christian tradition faith is often the main motivations for belief in God, not reasons that could directly establish God's existence.

non-epistemic reasons limits certainty of such propositions.[7] Meaning, by my account, intolerance can not be motivated by such beliefs.

One might argue that religious beliefs have a non-epistemic status (a.k.a. Fideism). Or that they have a different epistemic realm and cannot be created or destroyed with 'normal' evidentialist reasons (aka Wittgensteinian Fideism) (Phillips 1992; Malcolm 2000). Both of these positions have the effect that a belief in God is not open to normal epistemic reasons for justification or revision. Meaning, judging other's justification *might* not be possible. This does not cause problems for this particular theory of toleration though. Even if one accepts that belief in god is not subject to epistemic reasons it would be another thing altogether to argue that the moral propositions in religious texts are subject to the same safeguarding from argument or reasons. I think it is safe to say that our moral beliefs must be rationally justified like other worldly beliefs.

Section 3: Applications of the Epistemic Theory of Tolerance

In this section I want to proceed with applying this theory of tolerance to the problems that faced us in Section 1. Let's briefly remind ourselves of the issues currently faced. The most substantial problem is how exactly to limit tolerance so that it does not devolve into allowing exactly the sort of harm to be done that tolerance is meant to curb. To do this we are meant to work out the relationship between judgements that some action or belief is bad and the judgment to act intolerantly towards that action or belief. While doing this it is important, in my opinion, to preserve the reasonableness of the belief that an action is bad while allowing some person to act tolerantly. Finally, It will be important to make sense of the relationship between indifference and intolerance and the relationship between individual and societal level tolerance judgements.

3.1 Away with the Problems of Tolerance

A higher justification requirement for intolerance now makes it apparent why exactly the form of argument in Section 1.2 is invalid. Such arguments ring false when justification is low. Given this, the extra premise would belie some information about the justification to believing M. Consider a new argument: Premise 1C: X is morally bad. Premise 2C: I am justified in believing 1C to a high degree of Certainty. Conclusion: I should be intolerant of X. I am arguing that this form of the argument is

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[7] Unless, of course, you are a doxastic pluralist in which case certainty or degree of belief can be equal even among contradictory propositions. Further, you might think that non-epistemic reasons are the basis for all epistemic differences.

valid. In the case of murder premise 2C is true, while in the case of homosexuality or idolty, no one can offer suffcent evidence to establish that they are justifed enough to be intolerant.

Given this account is correct, it is possible to both hold a belief reasonably and not be justified in interfering with other's beliefs and practices based on it. Under this new epistemic light, the difference between calls for tolerance and calls for indifference is clear. Calls for tolerance ask a person or group to evaluate whether or not they are highly justified in their belief in some X being morally bad; while calls for indifference ask whether that belief is minimally justified. As of now, several things that normally get called calls for toleration are really calls for indifference. Those who are anti-racist, anti-homophobic, anti-xenophobic, etc. are not merely asking for one to reconsider one's intolerant actions in light of epistemic uncertainty but demanding that one recognize that these beliefs are not minimally justified in the first place.

Sometimes it is unreasonable or impractical to ask people to totally reconsider their beliefs. In which case mutual tolerance is the most one can hope for, since they do not need to revise those beliefs, merely not act intolerant because of them. Alon Harel argues that "views, opinions, or values can be an aspect of a wider net of opinions and sensibilities that, taken together, form a distinctive style or way of life" and that those views, opinions, and values are indivisible from that way of life (Harel 1998, 116-17). He goes on to argue that if certain intolerant beliefs are 1) actually integral to that way of life; and 2) that way of life is itself valuable, this provides good reason to tolerate those intolerant beliefs.[8] This indivisibility would cause significant issues for the epistemic account here. Since, analyzing justification of ways of life, or webs of belief is significantly harder and more impractical than analyzing justification of beliefs piecemeal. I am apt to argue that this indivisibility is a soft-indivisibility. There is nothing inherently contradictory in replacing those beliefs, it's merely the case that certain sets of beliefs are often packaged together into 'comprehensive ways of life.' While this is fine to start with, obviously one needs to be able to continuously reflect on one's beliefs and revise according to evidence. Tolerance, can be a technique for getting one's foot in the intellectual door of someone with suspect moral beliefs. It can also be an indefinite strategy for coexistence in the face of interpersonal conflict.

As mentioned before, this account is in conflict with both epistemic pluralism and certain kinds of moral pluralism. In the case of epistemic pluralism, it is possible for different agents to disagree about the extent of the justification. If something like volunteerism is true and our epistemology is motivated by a choice of epistemic values, meaning this epistemic account would rely on first order

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[8] The author uses Orthodox Jews, who have certain views about women's place in society that would be considered sexist as the example of one such inseparable integration. (Harel 1998, 116).

value judgments. Thus making us prey to the same issues that Scanlon and others face. In the case of moral pluralism there is no direct contradiction with the analysis set out here. In this case, not only would the moral beliefs differ but the moral facts would differ. This analysis would require people to make justification judgements about moral facts that simply are not true for them; which may be too much to ask.

This may seem to push the practical problem of moral disagreement onto the practical problem of epistemic disagreement. It does. However, this is a much more tractable and less divisive issue, at least for those among us that are not epistemologists. If we can agree on either how justification functions with regard to some of our moral beliefs or we can create an iterative list of those moral beliefs that are highly justified, then we get a way to objectively reconcile our actions in the face of the variety of moral beliefs that stem from a diversity of experience and prior conditions.

Section 3.2 Tolerance at the Individual and Societal Level

Early I said that my account did not require an assessment of risk and this is true for the personal level judgements. But there is a need for us to set the epistemic bar with metaethical reasons. There are several ways we can go about this. We could employ a tool like Rawls's Veil of Ignorance to come to agreement on the risks and required justifications of intolerance (Rawls 1971). Or perhaps, some have argued there are objective standards implied about communities, even if we consider the morality underlying that community to be pluralistic (Herman 1998). My goal in this paper was to show that this account had promising foundations and that there are a variety of tools to secure the account against the problems it will face. With that in mind, I am going to discuss the considerations that are at play when setting the epistemic bar.

Polity's wield great potential for imposition of moral beliefs onto their citizens. With that power comes great potential for oppression of those with different beliefs and practices. On the other end of the spectrum, were states too liberal in what moral beliefs are enforced, there is the possibility of fumbling justice in the face of moral turpitude or sacrificing what are normally perceived as basic freedoms. States have monopoly on force, their word carries with it a promise of coercion. This power is obviously more influential than an individual's ability to cause harm. And with greater power comes an increased risk level. Correspondingly, the justification of the moral beliefs that motivate creating intolerant laws must be stronger than would be sufficient in the case of individual intolerance. In a slogan: the potential cost is higher, therefore the epistemic risk must be lower.

Liberalism under this account, can be conceived of as raising the epistemic bar for top-down moral enforcement. This very nicely resolves some of the open questions regarding liberalism and multiculturalism alike. Liberalism faces a problem that non-liberal states do not. Non-liberal states do not need to distinguish between those acts which they believe to be morally wrong but should tolerate and those acts which they believe to be morally wrong but shouldn't tolerate. They simply act intolerantly to varying degrees. In doing so, the liberal argues, they are obstructing actions which are either not morally wrong, therefore they cannot be justified in deterring such actions; or there is a certain amount of uncertainty regarding the wrongness of their actions and one should not limit the freedoms of others on such uncertain grounds.

Individuals (as opposed to states, poities, communities) carry a significantly smaller stick. And as that risk of harm goes down I argue that the degree of justification needed follows. Interfering for the individual is limited to decisions with whom to associate with, whom they employ, whom they protest, and under what circumstances they try to directly interfere with the actions of others. Even if they are utilizing all legal means, the potential consequences are significantly lower than the potential harm of force-backed state intolerance. While I do not want to diminish the potential of individuals or some groups acting independently to produce great community damage, small sticks still hurt when you're hit with them, as a general rule the potential is lower. And in circumstances where the stakes are higher, the epistemic justification must still be commensurate. This is another favorable attribute of the theory presented here; there is no need to set absolute standards for justification; it only needs to be proportionate to the risk.

Where individuals do pose a great risk or the justification for some action is high, there are societal level means of minimizing said risk. For example, in the United States there are various protected classes. One can neither be discriminated against for being or not being a part of anyone of these classes.[9] This illustrates one of the many ways in which a state can be intolerant of certain moral beliefs by disallowing certain actions outright. Another example is stricter punishments for crimes with specific motivations, i.e.. Hate crimes. When certain individuals or fractional communities within the larger society have practices/beliefs with spillover effects on other communities or the polity at large there is reason to consider whether or not the beliefs that motivate those effects are sufficiently justified. If not, there is reason to consider producing laws that protect communities from those spillover effects, given that we are sufficiently justified in the belief that those effects are bad, of course.

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[9] These classes in the US include race, color, sex (including pregnacy, and sexual orientation), gender Identity, national origin, ascnetry, age, disability, genetic Information, veteran Status, and Citizenship. ("Protected Class | Practical Law" n.d.)

Section 4: Conclusion

In this form, tolerance starts to look related to epistemic humility. It seems no accident that liberalism and the epistemic humility of scientific practices progressed simultaneously in the enlightenment and I have the sense that they are structurally dependent on each other. I think there are a variety of interesting places to proceed from that relationship and believe that the conclusions of an exploration could reveal conclusions about both scientific and moral practices.

You may notice that I have not dealt specifically with the limit of tolerance in any practilar cases, besides revealing myself as anti-murder, which is hardly an orginally position. The motivation of this paper was solely the production of the epistemic account of tolerance and exploring the kinds of metaethical reasons that such an account spits out. As mentioned, if one sets the epistemic bar too high, reasonable intolerance won't be allowed. If you set it too low, unreasonable intolerance will run rampant. I hope there is a stable place between these to set the bar and a discussion of this is necessary for this account to be successful. In its current form, it shows promise in solving the manifold theoretical issues that face the tolerant liberal. Something no other account has been successful in.

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