THE MORAL VIRTUE OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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VERY BROADLY, social consciousness is a cognitive sensitivity to surrounding social injustices. We see it on display in public calls for climate action and protests against police brutality, but it is also present in the private recognition of the dire straits of the single mom next door who, despite working multiple jobs, still struggles to keep food on the table. Social consciousness is primarily a cognitive phenomenon: it is about how we *think* about social injustices. However, it has a distinct moral cast too: it is morally good, perhaps even morally required, to think in the ways constitutive of social consciousness. The goal of this paper is to develop an account of social consciousness that pays due respect to both its cognitive and moral dimensions.

To begin theorizing about social consciousness, it is helpful to note its similarity to the nearby concept of "wokeness"—that is, of being alert to racial injustices. Although wokeness may be a more familiar concept and is addressed in the relevant literature, I have chosen to focus on social consciousness for a few different reasons. First, there remain worries about epistemic appropriation and misuse whenever terms and concepts originating in marginalized communities are detached from communities—worries that were discussed as early as 1962 by William Melvin Kelley and have been developed more recently by Emmalon Davis.[1] Second, given its etymology, wokeness typically regards cognitive sensitivity to social injustices that are suffered specifically by Black people.[2] This paper aims to account for cognitive sensitivity to social injustices suffered not only by Black people but also by members of other historically marginalized social groups (including women, First Nations, the LGBTQ+ community) as

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1   Kelley, "If You're Woke You Dig It"; and Davis, "On Epistemic Appropriation." For a helpful analysis of epistemic detachment, see Pollock, "Political Action, Epistemic Detachment, and the Problem of White-Mindedness."

2   The term 'woke' traces back to Black thinkers and communities in the 1920s but entered contemporary mainstream discourse after the 2014 killing of Michael Brown at the hands of police in Ferguson, Missouri. The term continued to gain prominence throughout the Black Lives Matter movement. For more on the etymology of 'woke' and 'wokeness', see Romano, "A History of Wokeness."

well as individuals at the intersection of multiple marginalized groups. Finally, the term 'woke' has become increasingly politicized, which threatens to cloud efforts to account for the related concept clearly and accurately.

That said, given the similarities between wokeness and social consciousness, any philosophical account of the former can be modified to apply to the latter. After all, both wokeness and social consciousness are forms of cognitive sensitivity to social injustices. Accounting for either of them amounts to spelling out what exactly this cognitive sensitivity amounts to—what cognitive states constitute the relevant sensitivity—and how exactly moral values govern or otherwise relate to those states.

With that in mind, consider Rima Basu's recent suggestion that wokeness can be understood through the lens of moral encroachment.[3] Moral encroachment is an epistemological view according to which moral considerations get a say in what is epistemically rational to believe. On Basu's view, the cognitive sensitivity at the center of wokeness amounts to believing in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment, which is a moral duty.

After extending this view to social consciousness—I call it the *encroachment account of social consciousness*—I raise a few worries about it: not only does it involve controversial theoretical commitments, but it also entails unintuitive verdicts in relevant cases and implies that social consciousness is very (maybe even excessively) demanding. In light of these worries, I develop an alternative account of social consciousness: the *virtue account*. Taking cues from Nomy Arpaly's discussion on open-mindedness as a moral virtue, I suggest that the cognitive sensitivity at the center of social consciousness is better understood as a morally virtuous cognitive disposition that manifests itself primarily in certain doxastic states.[4] I argue that the virtue account not only weathers the worries that trouble the encroachment account but also captures several important features of social consciousness better than the encroachment account.

Before moving ahead, I want to pause on the starting assumption that social consciousness is primarily cognitive. Some may object that social consciousness is about acting, not just believing, in certain ways. To be socially conscious, we must fight against and redress social injustices. Belief without action is hollow. In response, it is worth emphasizing that what we believe heavily shapes how we act: thinking in the ways constitutive of social consciousness, on any account, will tend to lead to certain actions. So if someone fails to act in ways that we would expect a person with the relevant beliefs to act—or if they act in ways that seem to conflict with those beliefs—this gives us reason

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3   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 17.
4   Arpaly, "Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue."

to doubt that they have the relevant beliefs or else doubt that those beliefs are rightly related to morality. For example, if an employer professes antiracism yet consistently hires and promotes white folks over equally qualified Black folks, then we have reason to doubt that the employer actually believes and values what she professes.

That said, for those who maintain that action is more central to social consciousness than the assumption allows, I invite you to take the following project as an attempt to account for the cognitive side of social consciousness rather than its whole.

1. THE ENCROACHMENT ACCOUNT

Rima Basu has recently suggested that we can understand "moral encroachment as a systematic treatment of the imperative to stay woke."[5] This suggestion points us toward the encroachment account of social consciousness. To get a good grasp on this account, we must get a good grasp on moral encroachment.

1.1. Moral Encroachment

Very broadly, moral encroachment is the view that morality gets a say in what is epistemically rational to believe.[6] Specifically, moral encroachment says that moral considerations help set the evidential threshold that a belief must pass in order to be epistemically rational. In cases where the moral stakes for a belief that p are high, the believer tends to need stronger evidence in support of p for the belief to be epistemically rational.

It is helpful here to consider the cases of high moral stakes that advocates of moral encroachment point to in order to motivate it. These cases tend to share similar features: a believer S infers something about an individual J based on statistical information about J's social group G; G has been historically marginalized; and S's socio-epistemic environment has been shaped by prejudiced attitudes and practices that negatively affect G. Consider the following cases.

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5   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 19. It is worth noting that Basu does not set out to develop an account of wokeness. Her remarks about wokeness are made mainly in passing as she develops and defends moral encroachment.

6   For recent defenses of moral encroachment, see Basu, "What We Epistemically Owe Each Other," "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs," "Radical Moral Encroachment," and "Can Beliefs Wrong?" See also Basu and Schroeder, "Doxastic Wronging"; Bolinger, "The Rational Impermissibility of Accepting (Some) Racial Generalizations"; Fritz, "Pragmatic Encroachment and Moral Encroachment"; Moss, "Moral Encroachment"; and Schroeder, "When Beliefs Wrong." For a helpful taxonomy of moral encroachment view, see Bolinger, "Varieties of Moral Encroachment." In this paper, I focus mostly on the Basu and Schroeder version of moral encroachment.

Server: Spencer works as a server at a restaurant. He senses that white diners tip more than Black diners. Doing a bit of research online, Spencer finds a well-documented social trend that Black diners tip substantially below average. Spencer weighs the evidence before reaching his belief that Black diners tip substantially below average. A Black diner, Jamal, enters Spencer's restaurant. Spencer believes that Jamal will probably tip below average.[7]

Teacher: Stacy is a fifth-grade teacher at a public elementary school. It is the first day of school, and she is meeting her students for the year for the first time. Two new students, Jenna and Joel, walk in. Stacy knows that on average, girls consistently score lower than boys on standardized math exams. In light of this, Stacy comes to believe that Jenna probably scored lower than Joel on last year's statewide standardized math exam.

Advocates of moral encroachment focus on the inferential belief in these cases: Spencer's belief that Jamal probably tips less than average and Stacy's belief that Jenna probably scored lower than Joel on last year's statewide math exam.[8] They then point to numerous moral features of these cases that explain why the moral stakes for these beliefs are high. Basu divides these moral features into three categories: upstream features, downstream features, and features of the belief itself.[9]

Upstream moral features regard the way the beliefs are formed. In these cases, the relevant statistical facts are true in part because the social group in question has been historically oppressed. With regard to Server, there are two main sociological explanations of racial disparity in tipping, both of which trace back to anti-Black racism: (1) because of low levels of income that result from being subject to a long legacy of anti-Black racism, Black people do not dine out at full-service restaurants as much and so are not as familiar with

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7   This is an adapted version of a case introduced by Basu, "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs." The adaption is from Gardiner, "Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment."

8   Throughout the paper, I will qualify the relevant inferential beliefs with *probably* or *likely*. Moral encroachment is motivated largely by cases of seemingly problematic beliefs that are supported by the believer's evidence and thus rational according to traditional theories of epistemic rationality. But *un*qualified inferential beliefs—"Jamal tips less than average" or "Jenna scored lower than Joel on last year's math exam"—may automatically go beyond the evidence. Evidence suggesting that most members of a set have some property does not firmly suggest that a randomly selected member has that property, but it does firmly suggest that a randomly selected member likely or probably has that property. So to ensure that the beliefs in question are supported by the believers' evidence, it is important to qualify the relevant inferential beliefs.

9   Basu, "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs."

percentage-based tipping norms; or (2) Black diners are systemically discriminated against by servers.[10] With regard to Teacher, empirical studies suggest that stereotypes related to gender and mathematical ability negatively affect girls' performance in competitive testing environments.[11] Some advocates of moral encroachment suggest that the moral stakes of inferential beliefs like Spencer's and Stacy's are raised because the evidence on which they are based is ultimately a result of racism (or sexism or some other form of prejudice).[12]

The moral stakes are even higher when this upstream moral feature is combined with other moral considerations about harmful risks and costs posed by the beliefs in question. Some of these harms are downstream and regard potential actions that the beliefs may lead to. For example, Stacy's belief about Jenna might lead her (perhaps subconsciously) to overlook or fail to foster Jenna's mathematical talent. What's more, these beliefs contribute to collective harms from which the targeted individual and social group suffer. For example, many servers believing that Black diners tip substantially below average leads to systematically poor service to Black diners, which in turn discourages Black patronage and exacerbates the ills of social segregation; such beliefs being prevalent also makes it harder for restaurants to retain servers in areas with a large percentage of Black patrons, which makes owners averse to opening restaurants in Black communities. Both the risk of harmful actions and the risk of collective harm posed by the beliefs in question raise the moral stakes for the beliefs in Server and Teacher.

Other harms arise because of features of the beliefs themselves. The properties ascribed to Jamal and Jenna—likely tipping or scoring below average—"bring them down."[13] They are also potentially demeaning and offensive: if Jamal or Jenna found out about these beliefs, they would probably feel hurt, or, at least, feeling hurt would be an apt response for them to have. These features of the belief itself are also thought to raise the moral stakes in cases like Server and Teacher.[14]

In sum, the moral stakes are high for the inferential beliefs in question in cases like Server and Teacher because of various moral features. The high moral stakes in these cases raise the evidential threshold that the beliefs in question

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10   For a helpful overview and critical discussion of the relevant sociological literature, see Brewster and Mallinson, "Racial Differences in Restaurant Tipping."

11   For a helpful overview of the role that stereotypes play in explaining the gender gap in math test scores, see Niederle and Vesterlund, "Explaining the Gender Gap in Math Test Scores."

12   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 14–15.

13   Schroeder, "When Beliefs Wrong," 124.

14   Basu, "What We Epistemically Owe Each Other," 920.

must pass in order to be rational. Group-level information about Black people and girls is not enough to push the relevant beliefs over this high evidential threshold. Beliefs that fail to pass the relevant evidential threshold are epistemically irrational. So according to moral encroachment, Spencer's and Stacy's respective beliefs are epistemically irrational, despite the group-level evidence they have in support of them.

1.2. The Encroachment Account of Social Consciousness

With a grasp on moral encroachment, we can better understand the thought that the cognitive sensitivity at the center of social consciousness amounts to something like abiding by the dictates of moral encroachment. It is worth quoting Basu here at length:

> [We can] understand moral encroachment … as the demand to stay woke. To be woke is to be aware of the moral demands of one's environment. With regard to our epistemic practices, it is the demand to be aware of the moral stakes of our beliefs about one another. [The demand to be woke] is the demand to be aware of the background against which our epistemic practices exist, i.e., the unjust world we inhabit, and to ensure that our epistemic practices are not only responsive to unjust features of our environment but that they also do not themselves contribute to those unjust features of our environment.[15]

In combination with Basu's view of moral encroachment, this passage points us toward an encroachment account of social consciousness that goes something like this:

Our socio-epistemic environment has been shaped by a long history of social injustices in ways that "stack the evidence" in favor of prejudiced beliefs.[16] As Basu puts it, "Facts may not be racist, but they may be products of racism," and so when reasoning and forming beliefs on the basis of such facts, "we must not ignore their provenance."[17] Given this, there is a moral duty to approach evidence and beliefs about marginalized social groups and the individuals that belong to them with extra care and sensitivity.[18] This is especially the case when the beliefs that may result pose harm to the individual and social group in question, thereby compounding the social injustices they already suffer.

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15   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 17.
16   Basu, "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs," 2497.
17   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 14.
18   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 15.

According to the encroachment account of social consciousness, this moral duty of extra care and sensitivity just is a moral duty to be socially conscious. When it comes to our "epistemic practices"—and how to specify the cognitive sensitivity at the center of social consciousness—being socially conscious requires us to believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment. So in order to satisfy the moral duty to be socially conscious, we must not form or maintain beliefs that fail to pass an evidential threshold raised high by the sort of moral considerations found in Server and Teacher.

On the encroachment account, beliefs like Spencer's and Stacy's that fail to pass an evidential threshold set high by the relevant sort of moral considerations are not only epistemically irrational; they are also morally impermissible. After all, such beliefs constitute a violation of the moral duty to be socially conscious. So by virtue of believing the way they do about Jamal and Jenna, Spencer and Stacy are condemnable from both an epistemic standpoint (for being epistemically irrational) and a moral standpoint (for violating a moral duty).

2. WORRIES ABOUT THE ENCROACHMENT ACCOUNT

Despite its initial appeal, the encroachment account of social consciousness faces some worries.

2.1. Worry One: Controversial Theoretical Commitments

The first worry concerns the theoretical commitments entailed by the encroachment account. Moral encroachment itself is controversial.[19] For one, it goes against the traditional thought that epistemic rationality is determined alone by evidential and other truth-related considerations.[20] It may also be worried that morality (which is complex and multifaceted) cannot map cleanly onto epistemic rationality (which is rather cut and dry) as moral encroachment implies.[21] People who reject moral encroachment as a theory of rationality for these or other reasons will also have to reject it as a basis for an account of social consciousness.

The encroachment account also has an unsavory moral commitment: namely, it renders believers morally condemnable for believing something on the basis of good reason for thinking it is true—at least, reason that is good enough to rationalize beliefs in many if not most contexts.

19　For critical discussions of moral encroachment, see Begby, "Doxastic Morality"; Gardiner, "Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment" and "Against the New Ethics of Belief"; and Brinkerhoff, "Prejudiced Beliefs Based on the Evidence."

20　Conee and Feldman, *Evidentialism*.

21　Gardiner, "Against the New Ethics of Belief."

2.2. Worry Two: Troubling Verdicts in Relevant Cases

What is more, the encroachment account of social consciousness is committed to troubling or at least unintuitive verdicts in a set of important cases. These are variations on cases like Server and Teacher in which the inferential beliefs in question are couched within a robust understanding of the social injustices that have shaped the believer's socio-epistemic environment—specifically, the social injustices that led to the relevant statistical facts. Consider the following variations on Server and Teacher.

Informed Server: Spencer knows that statistically, Black diners tip substantially below average and inferentially comes to believe that Jamal will likely tip below average. Spencer has recently read a lot about the historic and continued oppression of Black Americans. So in addition to the relevant statistical information, Spencer knows that Black Americans have been disadvantaged by structural racism for centuries in a multitude of ways that have negatively impacted Black communities. For one, it has led to systematic income inequality between Black Americans and white Americans. From his research, Spencer knows that it is this income inequality, not any vice or lack of virtue, that ultimately explains the tipping patterns of Black Americans.

Informed Teacher: Stacy knows that statistically, girls tend to score lower on standardized math exams than boys and infers that Jenna likely scored lower than Joel on last year's statewide standardized math exam. Stacy has recently done a lot of research about the gender gap in mathematical achievement. In addition to the relevant statistical information, Stacy knows that women and girls have been historically characterized in ways that impugn their mathematical abilities. From her research, Stacy knows that the gender disparity in math performance is explained not by a lack of rationality or analytic prowess in girls and women but rather by the ways that negative stereotypes about women and math negatively affect girls' math performance.

According to the encroachment account of social consciousness, Informed Server and Informed Teacher are paradigmatic cases of a failure to be socially conscious. After all, many of the moral features that raise the moral stakes in the original cases carry over to these variations. This means that Informed Spencer's belief about Jamal and Informed Stacy's belief about Jenna must pass a high evidential threshold. According to moral encroachment, the informed believers' group-level evidence is not sufficient to push their respective inferential beliefs over this threshold, and so they are epistemically irrational. The

beliefs are also morally impermissible, rendering Informed Spencer and Informed Stacy morally condemnable. By virtue of believing in the ways they do, Informed Spencer and Informed Stacy violate the moral duty to be socially conscious. Their respective understandings of the socio-epistemic landscape do not exonerate them.

The worry is that these verdicts about Informed Server and Informed Teacher seem mistaken. At least to me, Informed Spencer and Informed Stacy and their inferential beliefs seem to be both epistemically and morally in the clear.[22] In fact, it might be thought that Informed Spencer's and Informed Stacy's respective beliefs are characteristic of—not contrary to—social consciousness. The encroachment account, then, is committed to troubling or at least unintuitive verdicts in cases like these.

2.3. Worry Three: Demandingness

The final worry is about how demanding social consciousness is on the encroachment account: abiding by the dictates of moral encroachment is *excessively* demanding; more precisely, it is too demanding to be something that morality requires.

It is widely thought that we lack voluntary control over what we believe: what we believe is largely an involuntary response to our evidence.[23] If that is right, then it may often be nearly psychologically impossible for us to believe in the way that is required by moral encroachment, especially in cases like Server and Teacher in which moral encroachment requires us not to believe something that is seemingly supported by the evidence.

Setting aside the difficulties that arise from doxastic involuntarism—and even supposing that beliefs are not merely at the mercy of the evidence—abiding by the dictates of moral encroachment would still be very difficult: it involves a fair amount of intellectual sophistication to discern when the moral stakes for a belief are high and, by extension, when the sort of evidence that is

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22 By saying that these beliefs seem morally in the clear, all I mean is that there seems to be nothing inherently morally wrong with the beliefs themselves. I do not mean to imply that it is morally permissible for either Informed Spencer or Informed Stacy to act on them in ways that might disadvantage Jamal or Jenna. In fact, it seems clear to me that doing so would be morally impermissible. For example, it would be morally impermissible for Spencer to give Jamal poorer service in light of his inferential belief. See section 4 of Brinkerhoff, "Prejudiced Beliefs Based on the Evidence" for a discussion about how believers in cases like The (Informed) Server and The (Informed) Teacher may be morally condemnable even if relevant beliefs themselves are in the clear.

23 For canonical contemporary discussions of doxastic involuntarism, see Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification"; and Audi, "Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of Belief."

normally sufficient to rationalize a belief does not cut it. This sort of sophistication may be out of reach for many people in many contexts. More generally, it will be difficult for anybody—no matter their socio-epistemic environment, cognitive skills, or education level—to believe differently in different contexts based on similar evidence.

The fact that social consciousness is very demanding on the encroachment account does not alone give rise to the worry that it is *excessively* demanding. After all, as Basu emphasizes, being morally good is difficult, and so we should expect social consciousness to be difficult too.[24] The worry arises because on the encroachment account, being socially conscious is a moral duty; we are thereby morally in the wrong and blameworthy for having beliefs proscribed by moral encroachment. Social consciousness, the worry goes, may be morally good and important, and we morally should promote, pursue, and praise it. But perhaps it is too demanding to be something morality *requires*.

Appeals to doxastic involuntarism have often been used to argue against views that imply that there are (moral) duties or obligations on belief.[25] But even if these arguments can be successfully countered, there remain worries about moral duties to believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment given difficulties arising from the required intellectual sophistication as well as the limits of our socio-epistemic environments.

To sharpen these worries, it is helpful to consider cases in which the socio-epistemic environment is even more impoverished than our own. Consider this case adapted from Arpaly.[26]

> *Farm Boy*: Solomon believes that most women are bad at abstract thinking or, at least, not half as good as men. He was born and raised in a small, isolated farming community in a poor country, where this belief is not only assumed by everyone around him but also confirmed by his everyday interactions. Women in his community talk exclusively about family matters and gossip, even when Solomon tries to talk with them about morality and religion; the few people in his community who engage in abstract thinking are men; and works of abstract thought in the community's outdated library are authored solely by men. When Solomon meets Joyce, his new neighbor, he comes to believe that she is likely bad at abstract thinking.

24   Basu, "Radical Moral Encroachment," 19.
25   See the discussion of the problem of control in Basu and Schroeder, "Doxastic Wronging."
26   Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue*, 105–6.

According to the encroachment account, Solomon's belief about Joyce is not only epistemically irrational but also morally impermissible since it violates Solomon's moral duty to be socially conscious. By virtue of having it, Solomon is morally blameworthy. But this verdict does not seem quite right. As Endre Begby writes in a discussion of similar cases, "We will want to make room for the idea that people who grow up in deeply prejudiced settings with no rational access to contrary evidence should in some sense be counted as victims too."[27] Solomon is in an unfortunate evidential situation, through no fault of his own. He seems misinformed, not blameworthy or even prejudiced. Perhaps Solomon has room for moral improvement when it comes to his beliefs, but given the poverty of his socio-epistemic environment, it is doubtful whether his current doxastic states render him morally condemnable. After all, his belief about Joyce is based on good reason for thinking it is true.

By holding Solomon morally accountable for his belief about Joyce, the encroachment account leaves no room to count believers like Solomon as being hindered or excused by his socio-epistemic environment. This points us back to the demandingness worry: being socially conscious (when understood as requiring us to abide by the dictates of moral encroachment) is too demanding to be something that morality requires, especially in light of the constraints of our socio-epistemic environments.

3. THE VIRTUE ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Although none of these three worries is decisive against the encroachment account, they mount a significant case against it when taken together. It is worth looking for another account of social consciousness, then, that does not face similar worries. The account I have in mind gets off the ground with two ideas. The first idea is that social consciousness is a moral virtue (instead of, more narrowly, a moral requirement). The second idea is that the doxastic states described in Informed Server and Informed Teacher are characteristic of social consciousness, not inimical to it. This gives us a good place to start. Perhaps the cognitive sensitivity central to social consciousness amounts to something like a morally virtuous cognitive disposition—and the corresponding doxastic states—to recognize and remain alert to surrounding social injustices.

3.1. Another Moral-Doxastic Virtue: Open-Mindedness

To flesh out these ideas, it is helpful to look at another account of a moral-epistemic virtue: open-mindedness.

27 Begby, "Doxastic Morality," 168.

Open-mindedness is a cognitive trait that disposes us to "gain, lose, and revise beliefs in a particular reasonable way."[28] It is expressed or manifested in various doxastic states. For example, we see open-mindedness in a parent who, against his religious convictions, changes his mind about gay marriage when he observes his child thriving in a same-sex relationship; we also see it in a scientist who, after years of defending her pet hypothesis, rejects it upon encountering strong new evidence against it.

In her account of open-mindedness, Arpaly assumes along with Aristotle that moral virtues and expressions of moral virtue necessarily stem from moral concern.[29] Moral concern amounts to desiring or caring about the right or the good and so boils down to various morally good affective states—for example, caring about the well-being of others or desiring to see them flourish. Consider the moral virtue of charity. Charity is a trait that disposes us to act in ways that benefit people faring poorly out of concern for their well-being. In order to be genuine expressions of charity, actions that benefit others who are faring poorly—for example, donating a large sum of money to a nonprofit organization—must be done with an intention of helping those in need. Donating a large sum of money with an intention of boosting one's own reputation is neither morally virtuous nor a genuine expression of charity.

Expressions of moral virtues are typically thought to be actions. The interesting thing about open-mindedness—and the thing that makes it relevant to our discussion of social consciousness—is that it is a cognitive disposition the manifestations of which are primarily doxastic states rather than actions. It might be wondered how expressions of moral virtue that are *doxastic* can stem from moral concern. After all, what makes it the case that a particular action expresses moral concern is that it is done with a morally good intention—for example, an intention to help those in need. But assuming that believing is largely involuntary, believing is not intentional in the relevant sense. Given this, it may seem puzzling how doxastic states can be expressions of moral concern or, by extension, how a cognitive disposition can be a moral virtue.

Even so, Arpaly argues, we can make sense of open-mindedness as a moral virtue and its doxastic states as genuine expressions of moral virtue. That is because beliefs can also stem from moral concern, although in a more indirect way than actions can: our concerns—including moral ones—affect what we come to believe indirectly by affecting our emotions, attention, ability to learn, and the conclusions we draw. Let us consider each in turn below.

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28   Arpaly, "Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue," 75.
29   Arpaly, "Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue," 75.

3.2. *The Effect of (Moral) Concerns on Belief*

First, our concerns influence our emotions, which in turn affect what we believe. To borrow examples from Arpaly, "If you are infatuated with a woman, you might be blind to her faults, and if you are angry at a man, you might be blind to his virtues.… If you are afraid of your teacher, you might overestimate his height."[30]

Moral concerns also affect our emotions and thereby our beliefs. Out of moral concern, we may feel guilt for having broken a promise, anger at an injustice, or joy when another succeeds despite great hardship. This guilt, anger, and joy can in turn affect our beliefs. Joy at the success of another, for example, can influence our view about the good things in life.

Second, our concerns affect how we direct our attention, and this in turn affects what we believe. If I care about music, I will tend to notice what songs are playing in the background of the coffee shop and form corresponding beliefs ("This is 'Come Together' from *Abbey Road*") that I would otherwise lack. Similarly, if you are a gastronome, you will tend to pick up on subtle flavors and ingredients and form corresponding beliefs ("This soup has rosemary and a hint of sage") that people with less discriminating tastes lack. What is more, our concerns affect what we turn our attention *away* from in ways that affect our beliefs. If I am worried about my generation's obsession with celebrity culture, I may turn my attention away from the tabloids in the checkout line and thus lack beliefs that I would otherwise have if I flipped through their pages.

Moral concerns also affect our attention and thereby our beliefs. Out of moral concern, we might be more attentive to the needs and interests of others and to various moral features of our environment, and what we notice affects our beliefs. Upon noticing that a student is extremely shy, for example, his teacher may come to believe that there are better ways of encouraging him to participate than cold-calling on him in class. And a manager of a nursing home may come to believe that investing in therapy dogs is better than investing in new chairs for the dining room after he notices how much interacting with pets lifts the spirits of his residents. What is more, out of moral concern, we may turn our attention *away* from some things in ways that affect our beliefs. If I care about my friend's privacy, I will turn my attention away from the text she is furiously typing on her iPhone, and I will thus lack beliefs that I would otherwise have about its contents.

Third, our concerns affect our ability to learn and what we retain. If I care more about American politics than military history, for example, I will more readily learn and retain information about American politics than military

30   Arpaly, "Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue," 77.

history. Arpaly explains this in two ways.[31] First, I will be more likely to "do my homework" when it comes to American politics—studying, researching, and keeping up with political news—and this will in turn lead to a body of relevant beliefs that I otherwise would lack if I slack off instead. Second, given my interest, I will be more likely to remember the information—and retain corresponding beliefs—that I learn about American politics than about military history.

Moral concerns also affect our ability to learn and thereby affect our beliefs. For example, if you care about helping those in need, you will likely "do your homework" about which charities maximize the utility of your donations and thereby form corresponding beliefs. And if a boss cares about his employees' comfort and interests, he is more likely to remember that most of them prefer the office thermostat to be set higher than what he personally prefers.

Fourth, our concerns affect what conclusions we draw and how much confidence we have in them. If I care about getting something right (or about not getting something wrong), then I will tend to be more careful when reasoning about the relevant evidence—I might be more cautious in drawing conclusions and more skeptical about the conclusions I do draw. For example, if I care deeply about making a good impression during a big presentation at work, I will be less likely to conclude that the presentation is at noon based on a fuzzy memory of my boss saying so in an email last week.

Moral concerns also affect our conclusions. If an airplane mechanic cares about the well-being of the passengers on the planes under her care, she will be less likely to conclude that the plane is ready to fly without first double-checking the relevant evidence. And if you care about the well-being of a colleague with a peanut allergy, you will be extra careful before concluding that the cookies you are about to serve her are peanut-free.

3.3. *Social Consciousness as a Moral Virtue*

We have just seen how moral concerns can affect our beliefs indirectly by affecting our emotions, attention, ability to learn, and conclusions. With that in mind, we can now return to the suggestion that social consciousness is a moral virtue.[32]

Social consciousness, like open-mindedness, is a cognitive disposition. Roughly, it is the cognitive disposition to recognize and remain alert to surrounding social injustices. As a moral virtue, social consciousness is necessarily

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31 Arpaly, "Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue," 77–78.

32 I do not intend for the virtue account of social consciousness to entail a commitment to virtue ethics as the correct normative ethical theory. The existence of moral virtues, I take it, is consistent with a variety of normative ethical theories.

rooted in moral concern—specifically, concerns for the well-being and interests of those who suffer the social injustice in question.[33] If I have a disposition to recognize and remain alert to gender injustices because I am a sociologist collecting data for my new book on sexism in the workplace, then it is not clear that this disposition is a moral virtue.[34]

The virtue of social consciousness is expressed through various doxastic states related to social injustices. Socially conscious people will tend to have true beliefs about the existence of social injustices—about their history, legacy, and continuing impact—that others lack. They will also tend to have beliefs about instantiations and effects of social injustices presently occurring and the mechanisms through which they are perpetuated. In addition, socially conscious people will tend to lack false beliefs that stereotype marginalized social groups in ways that prop up or reinforce social injustices. They will also tend away from defaulting to readily available but mistaken explanations of statistical or group-level information about such groups—for example, that Black diners tip less than average because they are less generous.

In order to be genuine expressions of social consciousness, these doxastic states must stem indirectly from moral concerns. That is, the doxastic states of socially conscious people are genuine expressions of moral virtue to the extent that these states result indirectly from the ways that their moral concerns have affected their emotions, attention, ability to learn, and conclusions. In socio-epistemic environments riddled with social injustices, the socially conscious person's moral concerns may involve caring generally about the

33 This part of the virtue account can help explain why "the performativity of wokeness" (or, more relevantly, "the performativity of social consciousness") is, at the very least, morally hollow. To the extent that public professions of beliefs and values characteristic of social consciousness are motivated by something other than moral concern for those who suffer the relevant injustices—whether it be an individual's desire to garner a reputation as someone who cares about "the right things" or to avoid criticism for failing to be sufficiently "woke," or a company's desire to attract the business of a demographic who tends to care about social injustices—these professions are, at the very least, not morally virtuous.

34 Details matter here. Perhaps I chose to research gender injustice because I was socially conscious in the first place and wanted to study something morally worthy. In this case, it is plausible that my disposition to notice gender injustices is ultimately rooted in moral concern for those suffering the injustices. So to make this example work, we need to imagine that this cognitive disposition is ultimately rooted not in moral concern but in something like personal career ambition. Perhaps I chose to research gender injustice in the workplace not because I was already socially conscious but mainly because it was a "hot topic" garnering lots of attention in my field while I was in grad school, and focusing on it made my prospects on the job market more promising. In this case, it is plausible that my cognitive disposition to notice gender injustices is not a moral virtue. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

flourishing of marginalized social groups and particularly about individuals who have been harmed by social injustices, wanting them to see justice and equal opportunity, and desiring the eradication of social injustices.

Out of moral concern, the socially conscious person will have emotional responses to the social injustices in her environment that go on to influence her beliefs. For example, she may feel anger at the unjust killing of George Floyd, and this anger may inform her beliefs about the urgency of police reform. Or she may feel admiration during the confirmation of Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, and this admiration may inform her beliefs about the importance of better representation in institutions of power.

Out of moral concern, the socially conscious person will be more likely to notice social injustices around her, which will lead her to form beliefs that she otherwise would not have about the existence of social injustices and their myriad instantiations. For example, a socially conscious admissions counselor may notice how legacy preferences disproportionately disadvantage applicants from low-income families, who are less likely to have a parent with a university degree. And a socially conscious Black teenager may notice that several of her Black neighbors but none of her numerous drug-using white peers are imprisoned on nonviolent drug charges. What is more, a socially conscious person will be more likely to turn her attention away from things that promote negative stereotypes about marginalized social groups, which will make her less likely to form corresponding beliefs. For example, a socially conscious person may choose to unfollow a friend who regularly tweets stigmatizing messages about Muslim immigrants or to ignore sitcoms that habitually portray women as ditzy and incompetent.

Out of moral concern, the socially conscious person will be more interested in issues involving social injustices. This in turn will lead her to "do her homework" about such matters, listen to the victims of the injustice, and remember what she has learned. For example, caring about the flourishing of Black communities, a socially conscious person may look into and remember information about the ways that historical redlining practices in the housing sector combine with current practices for funding local schools to systemically disadvantage Black students.[35] For another example, caring for the well-being of the global poor, a socially conscious person may research and remember how climate

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35　"Research" will look different depending on the social position of the socially conscious person. If the socially conscious person belongs to the marginalized community in question, "research" may involve observing and reflecting on her surroundings and conversing with friends and family instead of reading books and doing Google searches. This is discussed further in section 5.3 below.

change will disproportionately harm those who are already the most economically disadvantaged.

Finally, out of moral concern, a socially conscious person may be more cautious when it comes to reasoning about marginalized social groups and their members. Wanting to get it right, a socially conscious person will be unlikely to draw hasty generalizations about social groups or individuals based on information about their apparent social groups. For example, a socially conscious person will be unlikely to conclude that girls are inherently worse at math upon encountering statistical information about gender disparities in mathematical achievement. A socially conscious person will also be less likely to commit other fallacies when reasoning about marginalized social groups, such as overestimating base rates of felonies among Black men. And despite knowing that most women in a particular office building are employed as administrative assistants, a socially conscious person may be wary of concluding that the woman he sees walking down the office hallway is an administrative assistant.

In sum: according to the virtue account, the cognitive sensitivity at the center of social consciousness amounts to a morally virtuous cognitive disposition to recognize and remain alert to surrounding social injustices. Like all moral virtues, this disposition is rooted in moral concern. Unlike most moral virtues, social consciousness is expressed primarily through doxastic states rather than through actions. In order to be morally virtuous, the doxastic states characteristic of social consciousness must flow from moral concern. Beliefs flow from moral concerns—not from morally good intentions—but through being indirectly affected by moral concerns. A socially conscious person's moral concerns affect her emotions, attention, ability to learn, and conclusions in ways that ultimately result in the doxastic states characteristic of social consciousness.

4. WEATHERING THE WORRIES

We now have two competing accounts of social consciousness on the table: the encroachment account and the virtue account. In this section, I want to consider how the virtue account fares in light of the three worries that trouble the encroachment account. I argue that these worries simply do not arise for the virtue account when it is spelled out.

4.1. Weathering Worry One: Controversial Theoretical Commitments

The first worry for the encroachment account is that it entails a number of controversial theoretical commitments involved in affirming moral encroachment about epistemic rationality. The virtue account does not share these

commitments because it does not hinge on any specific view about epistemic rationality. This means that the virtue account can be accepted by both advocates of moral encroachment and those who reject it. The virtue account also does not have the troubling implication that people can be morally blameworthy for believing something based on good reasons for thinking it is true. On the virtue account, believers like Spencer and Stacy in the original versions of their cases may not be socially conscious—as far as we know, they do not have the doxastic states characteristic of social consciousness—but they are also not morally (or epistemically) condemnable by virtue of having the inferential beliefs in question.

4.2. Weathering Worry Two: Troubling Verdicts

The second worry for the encroachment account is that it renders unintuitive verdicts in relevant variations on the cases that motivated moral encroachment—cases like Informed Server and Informed Teacher. The encroachment account entails that Informed Spencer's and Informed Stacy's respective inferential beliefs are epistemically irrational, morally impermissible, and manifestations of a moral failure to be socially conscious. Intuitively, though, these beliefs seem to be both epistemically and morally in the clear, and their broader set of doxastic states seems characteristic of social consciousness rather than contrary to it.

　　The virtue account recommends a different set of verdicts about Informed Server and Informed Teacher and their respective beliefs. First, the virtue account does not entail that Informed Spencer's and Informed Stacy's inferential beliefs are morally or epistemically bad, or contrary to social consciousness. Rather, on the virtue account, the doxastic states in these cases are indeed characteristic expressions of social consciousness: Informed Spencer and Informed Stacy have true beliefs about the history, legacy, and current instantiations of surrounding social injustices, and they lack false beliefs involving negative stereotypes or explanations of group-level information. That said, we do not have quite enough information about Informed Spencer and Informed Stacy to render a firm judgment about whether they are socially conscious. That is because we do not know if their doxastic states flow from moral concern or something else.

　　Consider the two following ways that Informed Teacher could be fleshed out. In both variations, assume that Stacy has the same doxastic states detailed in Informed Teacher.

　　Morally Virtuous Informed Teacher: Stacy cares deeply about the well-being of her students and desires to tailor her teaching to each student's

unique needs, interests, and skills in order to help them each to flourish. She was troubled upon learning about the gender gap in math achievement and started researching it. Stacy relies on the beliefs that result from her research to better serve her students. Stacy is now especially intentional about combating negative stereotypes regarding girls and math and about encouraging mathematical prowess in individual girl students when she sees it. She is saddened that negative stereotypes and gender norms have steered many women away from educational and career pursuits in STEM and becomes heartened whenever she hears of a woman flourishing in STEM. When Stacy notices one of her girl students struggling in math, she does not automatically conclude that that student is better suited for another academic subject or that she has below-average math skills.

Nonvirtuous Informed Teacher: Stacy is working toward her master's degree in education and is currently enrolled in a mandatory sociology course about gender and education. The professor has recently covered sociological studies about the gender gap in mathematical achievement and has notified the class that this material will feature prominently in the upcoming midterm. Stacy's beliefs about the gender gap in math performance ultimately flow from a desire to ace the midterm rather than from a desire to help her students flourish. She does not use this knowledge to make changes to her teaching or to better serve her students. Soon after the semester ends, Stacy forgets most of what she learned in the course.

In both variations, Stacy understands that it is ultimately sexist stereotypes that make it so that girls tend to score lower on average than boys on standardized math exams. So in both cases, Stacy has the doxastic states that are characteristic of social consciousness. But these doxastic states are morally virtuous expressions of social consciousness only in the first variation since they flow from moral concern. In the second variation, her doxastic states are not morally commendable because they do not flow from moral concern; even so, they are not necessarily morally condemnable either.

The upshot is that the virtue account renders more plausible verdicts about the moral and epistemic status of the doxastic states featured in cases like Informed Server and Informed Teacher that involve a robust understanding of the socio-epistemic landscape. The verdicts are that the informed believers' inferential beliefs are morally and epistemically in the clear, and their broader doxastic states may or may not be genuine expressions of social consciousness depending on how details about the believers' psychology are fleshed out.

4.3. Weathering Worry Three: Demandingness

Two features of the encroachment account give rise to the third worry: being socially conscious is, first, very difficult and, second, a moral duty. Social consciousness, the worry goes, is too difficult to be something that morality demands. This worry is brought out clearly in cases like Farm Boy in which the believers' socio-epistemic environment is especially impoverished, making it exceedingly difficult to satisfy the posited moral obligation to believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment.

The virtue account fares better here. Let us start with the first feature about the sheer difficulty of being socially conscious. There is no doubt that being socially conscious on the virtue account is fairly demanding—it involves certain forms of knowledge and an intellectual receptivity to available evidence that some believers may lack through no fault of their own. That said, unlike on the encroachment account, it does not involve refraining from having beliefs that are supported by the evidence. Given this, it may be plausible that the knowledge and receptivity needed for the moral virtue of social consciousness are more easily attainable for more people than the doxastic control and sophistication needed to abide by the dictates of moral encroachment.

But even if social consciousness on the virtue account is just as difficult as it is on the encroachment account, the virtue account is not troubled by the demandingness worry since it does not share the second feature. So long as having moral virtues is not morally obligatory, being socially conscious is not a moral duty on the virtue account.[36] Thus, the virtue account is not threatened by arguments against moral duties on belief that appeal to doxastic involuntarism. Also, it does not imply that those who are not socially conscious are thereby automatically blameworthy for their doxastic state.

This allows us to say that social consciousness is morally good and desirable: it is something that should be pursued, promoted, and praised. But because it is not a moral requirement, the virtue account does not automatically condemn believers who lack the relevant doxastic states through no fault of their own. In other words, on the virtue account, people who are innocently ignorant—either because of an impoverished socio-epistemic environment or because of a lack of intellectual sophistication or educational resources—are not morally

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36 Some may contend that having moral virtues is morally obligatory, and so if social consciousness is a moral virtue, being socially conscious is a moral obligation. In this case, it is less clear that the virtue account fares better than the encroachment account when it comes to the demandingness worry. The stance that it does fare better would depend on the claim that social consciousness on the virtue account is less difficult than on the encroachment account. I think this claim is plausible, but I am hesitant to rest my case on it.

blameworthy for their beliefs.[37] So on the virtue account, there is room to count innocently ignorant believers like Solomon the farm boy as being hindered by the poverty of their socio-epistemic environments. That said, the virtue account also implies that these believers have plenty of room for moral growth, since, at the very least, they lack an important moral virtue.

<div align="center">5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS</div>

We have been considering two competing accounts of social consciousness: the encroachment account and the virtue account. I have been arguing that the virtue account weathers the worries that trouble the encroachment account. To conclude, I want to shore up further support for the virtue account by considering a few things about social consciousness that it is best positioned to capture.

5.1. Social Consciousness and Social Reform

Social consciousness is morally important not only because it compels believers to recognize surrounding social injustices but also because it enables believers to organize and implement social reforms that are needed to remedy those social injustices. A reform initiative is unlikely to be effective if it is not clear who is harmed by the relevant social injustice. Because of this, the doxastic states characteristic of social consciousness must include beliefs about who is harmed by the relevant social injustices—both general beliefs about the affected social groups and, importantly, inferential beliefs about affected individuals *qua* members of affected social groups.

For example, it is important for believers to have not only group-level beliefs about incarceration rates among Black men but also inferential beliefs about particular individuals *qua* Black men. It is important for a socially conscious person to recognize that just by virtue of his race, John, a Black man, is more likely than Jake, a white man, to be incarcerated, and that the race of Jadyn, an incarcerated Black man, may help explain why his incarceration was more likely. As Gardiner explains, "Central to [social] injustice is the effect on individuals' life chances. . . . When a particular person is incarcerated, underemployed, participating in a crime, and so on, one potential source of injustice is their race, gender, or other social category means the outcome was more likely. And these

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37 These believers may be morally blameworthy by virtue of something else—for example, they may be blameworthy if they do not have a sufficient amount of moral concern. The point here is that they are not automatically blameworthy for their doxastic states. In other words, it is possible for believers like Solomon the farm boy to lack the beliefs characteristic of social consciousness and not be blameworthy for this in part because—despite their doxastic state—they do have sufficient amounts of moral concern.

are social facts we ought to acknowledge."[38] The point here is that it is only by having the relevant inferential beliefs that believers can grasp the full extent of the consequences of these social injustices and the tangible impact they have on real-life people, not just on abstract demographic groups. So inferential beliefs are essential to helping believers grasp the full extent of what needs to be done to address social injustices, and thus, inferential beliefs are essential to effective social reform.

In light of the role that social consciousness plays in ushering in social reform, the relevant inferential beliefs are an important part of the doxastic states that are characteristic of social consciousness. It is important, then, that an account of social consciousness is able to accommodate the potential moral value of these inferential beliefs. The virtue account can; the encroachment account cannot.

On the virtue account, inferential beliefs can be morally *commendable* for two reasons: they are morally commendable to the extent that they are an integral part of a set of doxastic states that enables believers to enact morally important social reform and that constitutes the moral virtue of social consciousness. In contrast, the encroachment account entails that these inferential beliefs are morally *condemnable* since they are proscribed by moral encroachment and thus constitute a violation of the moral duty to be socially conscious.

5.2. Accounting for Social Insensitivity

Let us call the opposite of social consciousness—whatever it is—social insensitivity.[39] I think that the picture of social insensitivity suggested by the virtue account is more robust and plausible than the picture suggested by the encroachment account.

Consider first what the encroachment account suggests about social insensitivity. Remember that on this account, being socially conscious is a moral obligation that requires us to believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment. This suggests that social insensitivity centrally involves violating this obligation. Those who do not believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment are socially insensitive and blameworthy for being such. In other words, on the encroachment account, believers who are not socially conscious are thereby socially insensitive.

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38   Gardiner, "Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment," 182.

39   The term 'social insensitivity' closely resembles 'racial insensitivity', a concept that has been theorized about at length by José Medina. On Medina's view, racial insensitivity can be a form of "active ignorance," which has both cognitive and affective dimensions. See Medina, "Ignorance and Racial Sensitivity" for further discussion.

Now let us consider what the virtue account suggests about social insensitivity. The opposite of moral virtues are moral vices, and so on the virtue account, social insensitivity is a moral vice. Being socially insensitive, then, amounts to more than just lacking the doxastic states characteristic of social consciousness. Like its morally virtuous counterpart, social insensitivity involves both cognitive and affective components: both components must be present in order for the particular vice to obtain. Social insensitivity is a morally vicious cognitive resistance to social injustices: it has its own distinct set of characteristic doxastic states, and in order to be expressions of the vice of social insensitivity, these doxastic states must flow from morally pernicious affective states or from a lack of good ones.[40]

The doxastic states characteristic of social insensitivity are counterparts to those characteristic of social consciousness. Socially insensitive people either lack beliefs or have misguided ones about social injustices, their history, and their legacy. Their beliefs tend to stereotype marginalized social groups in negative ways, and these beliefs prop up the relevant social injustices. Socially insensitive people also tend to default to readily available but mistaken explanations of group-level information—for example, that girls score lower than boys on math tests because they are inherently less intelligent.

But having the doxastic states characteristic of social insensitivity is not sufficient for social insensitivity. In order to be a moral vice, these doxastic states must flow from morally pernicious affective states or from a lack of good ones—either a desire that a certain social group and its members fare poorly or a lack of care about their well-being. Just as moral concerns can indirectly cause the beliefs characteristic of social consciousness, morally bad concerns can indirectly cause the doxastic states characteristic of social insensitivity.

For an example of a believer with morally pernicious affective states, consider an anti-Black racist who wishes the worst for Black people. The racist may seek out uncharitable interpretations of statistical information about Black people and become angry when she hears of efforts to redress past racial injustices. For an example of someone with a lack of sufficient moral concern, consider a math teacher who simply does not care much about the well-being of her students, much less the educational flourishing of her girl students. She may remain ignorant of the sexist stereotypes that pervade STEM despite plenty of accessible evidence of their existence and impact. In these examples,

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40 To clarify: it may be that having morally bad affective states is sufficient for being generally vicious on some level, but it is not sufficient for having the particular vice of social insensitivity. Similarly, it may be that having morally good affective states is sufficient for being generally virtuous on some level, but it is not sufficient for having the particular virtue of social consciousness.

the doxastic states characteristic of social insensitivity ultimately flow from morally bad affective states. This means that these believers have the moral vice of social insensitivity: their ignorance is not innocent, and it renders them morally condemnable.

The picture of social insensitivity painted by the virtue account makes room for innocently ignorant believers like Solomon. More generally, it makes room for believers who are neither socially conscious nor insensitive. Such believers may (1) have a sufficient amount of moral concern but nevertheless lack the cognitive states characteristic of social consciousness (and perhaps even have some of the cognitive states characteristic of social insensitivity) or (2) have the cognitive states characteristic of social consciousness but not ones that are rooted in moral concern.[41] When it comes to social consciousness/social insensitivity, Solomon is nonvirtuous and nonvicious in way 1 so long as his ignorance stems from features of his impoverished socio-epistemic environment rather than from morally bad affective states; the sociologist from section 3.3 may be nonvirtuous and nonvicious in way 2.[42]

In contrast, the picture of social insensitivity painted by the encroachment account does not leave room for innocently ignorant believers. After all, innocently ignorant believers and believers with morally bad affective states both violate the moral obligation to believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment, and thus, both are equally socially insensitive.

5.3. Social Consciousness in Marginalized Communities

The concept of wokeness originated in Black communities. If social conscious-ness amounts to something close to wokeness, then we might expect social consciousness to be especially prominent in Black (and other marginalized) communities. The virtue account clearly predicts just this, more clearly than the encroachment account.

Remember that the virtue account says that social consciousness has both an affective component and a cognitive component. Both components are likely to be especially prominent in marginalized communities in part because

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41   The type 2 nonvirtuous nonvicious person may have sufficient moral concern, but it is not what grounds the relevant cognitive disposition or its expressions, much like the person who has a disposition to tell the truth because of, say, autism rather than moral concern. For a discussion of this example, see Arpaly, "Open-Mindedness as a Moral Virtue," 75–76. Alternatively, this person may have morally bad affective states, in which case they may be generally vicious on some level even though they are not socially insensitive and are not morally blameworthy *for their beliefs*.

42   See note 34 above for discussion of relevant details about the sociologist example.

members of marginalized communities are more likely to have a personal connection with social injustices.

Start with the affective component, which involves moral concerns—that is, care about the well-being of people who are suffering social injustices and the flourishing of marginalized social groups. It is a fact about humans that we tend to care about things with which we have a personal connection, and so it would not be surprising if members of marginalized communities have the sorts of moral concerns at the heart of social consciousness. For example, consider Jasmine, a Black teenager whose brother has been a victim of police brutality and whose uncle and father are in prison on nonviolent drug offenses—a "crime" she sees her white peers get away with all the time. Given her close personal connection to the social injustices within the criminal justice system, Jasmine is especially likely to have the moral concerns at the heart of social consciousness. Jasmine probably cares deeply about the well-being of the victims of these injustices and the communities they harm, and she probably strongly desires the end of racism in the criminal justice system.

Now consider the cognitive component, which involves a cognitive disposition that results in characteristic doxastic states—that is, knowledge about injustices and a corresponding lack of ignorance. Standpoint theorists have long argued that members of marginalized communities have an epistemic advantage when it comes to knowledge about the inner workings of their social marginalization.[43] Many defend the *inversion thesis*: "Socially marginalized people, by virtue of their social location, have a superior epistemic position than non-oppressed people when it comes to knowing things about the workings of social marginalization that concern them."[44] Standpoint theorists defend the inversion thesis by arguing that socially marginalized people tend to have more informative experiences as well as greater motivation to understand their marginalization.

The epistemic advantage defended by standpoint theorists clearly involves beliefs (knowledge) about social injustices that are characteristic of social consciousness on the virtue account: socially marginalized people are more likely to know about the history, legacy, current instantiations, and inner workings

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43 For recent development and defense of standpoint epistemology, see Toole, "From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression," "Recent Work in Standpoint Epistemology," and "Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology." For a defense of the claim that socially marginalized people have a mostly contingent (rather than in principle) epistemic advantage when it comes to the inner workings of their social marginalization, see Dror, "Is There an Epistemic Advantage to Being Oppressed?" For more related discussions, see Mills, *Blackness Visible*.

44 Dror, "Is There an Epistemic Advantage to Being Oppressed?" 619.

of the social injustices they suffer. It is less clear that this epistemic advantage involves or could explain a tendency to believe in accordance with the dictates of moral encroachment.

What is more, the fact that socially marginalized people tend to have the beliefs characteristic of social consciousness on the virtue account can be explained in the same way that standpoint theorists explain the inversion thesis. People in marginalized communities are too often intimately familiar with social injustices—in fact, sometimes their very safety hinges on knowing about them.[45] Because of this, members of marginalized communities are exposed to lots of evidence and information about social injustices in their everyday lives and have greater motivation to understand them. This exposure, in combination with the relevant motivations and moral concerns, naturally gives rise to a cognitive disposition to recognize and remain alert to the relevant injustices as well as to the corresponding beliefs. Jasmine, for example, does not need to read *The New Jim Crow* in order to know about social injustices riddling the criminal justice system and how they harm Black people; she gains this knowledge just through living in her community.

In light of this, the virtue account seems to clearly predict that social consciousness is a moral marker of marginalized communities: members of marginalized groups are more likely to have close personal connections to social injustices, and it is plausible that these close personal connections naturally give rise to both the affective and cognitive components of social consciousness.

In sum: social consciousness is at its root a cognitive sensitivity to surrounding social injustices. We have considered two competing ways to account for this cognitive sensitivity and its relationship to morality: the encroachment account and the virtue account. I have argued that the virtue account is better. Not only does it weather the worries that trouble the encroachment account, but it can also accommodate the role that social consciousness plays in social reform, supports a more robust picture of social insensitivity, and predicts and explains the prominence of social consciousness in marginalized communities.[46]

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45 It is notable that one of the earliest recorded uses of 'woke' is in the 1938 song "Scottsboro Boys" by Blues musician Huddie Ledbetter (Lead Billy). He urged his fellow Black Americans to "stay woke, keep their eyes open" to race-based risks of danger, especially when passing through parts of the American South.

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