

**Clayton Littlejohn and John Turri, eds.** *Epistemic Norms: New Essays on Action, Belief, and Assertion*. Oxford University Press 2014. 272 pp. \$74.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199660025).

Over the past few decades, many philosophers have looked to what's traditionally been the focus of ethics—e.g., value and normativity—for insight into epistemological issues, problems, and views. Thus, *epistemic* value and normativity have come to occupy major and much-discussed roles within epistemology. Following in this general direction, *Epistemic Norms* presents a fine collection of papers by top epistemologists regarding the various ways normativity bears on epistemology.

Opening the text, Berit Brogaard examines the norms for belief, action, and assertion. Against knowledge accounts of action and assertion (whereby one can properly take  $p$  as a reason to act or assert that  $p$  only if one knows that  $p$ ), Brogaard defends norms based on intellectual flourishing—something akin to Aristotelian *eudaimonia* for the intellectual realm. Hence, asserting that  $p$  or taking  $p$  as a reason for action is properly undertaken only if such assertion or taking doesn't hinder one's intellectual flourishing. Other norms (e.g., the knowledge norm) are derived, since, presumably, they contribute to one's intellectual flourishing.

E. J. Coffman also contests the knowledge account of assertion. Other theories of warranted assertion rely on justification or rational credibility as standards, but Coffman argues for a different approach: the Would Be Knowledge account. On this view, a belief that  $p$  is 'would be knowledge' just in case believing  $p$  'would constitute knowledge were [one's] environment *considerably less misleading*' with respect to  $p$  (38). Thus located between the knowledge and justification accounts, Coffman argues his Would Be Knowledge norm captures and explains the linguistic data and our intuitions better than its competitors.

Moving to the epistemic norms governing practical action, Juan Comesaña and Matthew McGrath in Chapter 3 argue against what they call factualism (i.e., the view that a reason one has for acting must be a fact). That is, they claim that one can have a reason,  $r$ , to act where  $r$  is false. One can act rationally, they argue, based on a false belief. Thus, one's reasons for action need not be facts.

Next, Jonathan Dancy agrees with Comesaña and McGrath that one's reason for acting needn't be a fact. However, to act for the reason that  $p$ , Dancy argues, you must believe that  $p$ . Even though belief is required, one's reason isn't the belief itself but *what* you believe that forms the reason for action.

Shifting the sort of norm(s) under discussion, John Gibbons's chapter works towards uncovering the norm of belief via examining the aim of belief. Analyzing belief that  $p$  as commitment to the truth of  $p$ , Gibbons addresses defeaters insofar as they point out the need for belief revision (by attacking one's stance on the truth of  $p$ ). Defeaters do their work, he argues using Gettier cases, by giving evidence that you're not in a position to know that  $p$ . Thus, beliefs aim at knowledge rather than mere truth (otherwise defeaters wouldn't work in the ways they do).

Jonathan L. Kvanvig approaches epistemic normativity via rationality. In considering schematic understanding of human rationality, Kvanvig develops what he calls 'double aspect rules of rationality' (121). On one hand, we have the rules that guide our unreflective, typically automatic beliefs (he calls this "beastly" rationality). On the other, we can reflect on our thinking in a reflexive way (he calls this "reflective ascent"). The 'beastly' rules of rational specify the conditions one must

satisfy in order to have knowledge or rational beliefs. However, we are capable of second-order thoughts (about our thinking) and, thus, we have need of other rules specifying conditions we must meet to have fully reflective thought or belief.

Returning to the norm of action, Clayton Littlejohn examines the two main competitors: the knowledge account and the justification account. Arguing for the justification account, it seems, would thereby be arguing against the knowledge account. But not so, Littlejohn claims. Instead, if ‘knowledge is the norm of practical reason, theoretical reason cannot sanction any belief unless that belief is correct’ (152). That is, if knowledge is a practical norm, then what practical reason sanctions cannot conflict with theoretical reason (since what we know must be *true*). Thus, Littlejohn argues that the knowledge account can unify theoretical and practical reason’s demands in ways other approaches cannot—to the benefit of the knowledge account.

Duncan Pritchard’s chapter focuses on the norm of assertion. As we’ve seen, the debate here typically pits knowledge-based norms against those favoring a weaker account grounded in justification. However, Pritchard wants to motivate a third account utilizing a safety condition. A belief is safe when, ‘in close possible worlds, if one continues to form a belief on the same basis as in the actual world, then one’s belief continues to be true’ (155-6). A parallel norm based on safety applies to assertion: a true assertion is safe when ‘made on an epistemic basis such that it could not have easily issued in a false assertion’ (161). This safety norm of assertion, Pritchard argues, deals with cases not easily explained by the knowledge or justification accounts.

Ernest Sosa begins with judgmental belief: affirming or the disposition to affirm (via some propositional belief). Through epistemic agency, we (can) reflect on our beliefs and see that belief has two levels. At the primary (‘animal’) level, we have conscious beliefs but the secondary (‘reflective’) level involves higher order thought about our thinking on the primary/animal level. Given skeptical worries about the reflective level, suspension of belief (in light of those worries) becomes crucial. Thus, Sosa comes to consider the norms for *suspension* of belief. In particular, we may ask what happens if we perceive a conflict between the first-order animal judgment (grounded in faculties or processes) and the higher-order reflective concern for the accuracy of the animal level’s judgments. Which sort of epistemic competence determines whether to suspend belief? In this case, the reasons one possesses at the reflective level should correct and standardize the animal beliefs (grounded un-reflexively). Reflective thought is the norm of belief suspension.

Responding to Jennifer Lackey’s attacks on the knowledge norm of assertion, John Turri develops several lines of rebuttal. Lackey’s cases rest on instances of ‘selfless assertion’: where *S* asserts *p* when *S* fails to believe *p* but *S*’s epistemic state would amount to knowledge that *p* were *S* to believe *p*. Her cases deliver subjects that possess perfect epistemic credentials for knowledge but, due to some non-epistemic psychological block, cannot bring themselves to believe what they assert. Turri’s main response is to deny Lackey’s point that these selfless asserters lack belief. Instead, he develops the notions of ‘vicarious’ and ‘communal’ assertion; whereby *S* asserts that *p* *qua* member or on behalf of some collective that, we may suppose, really does believe (and hence know) that *p*. Hence, he argues that Lackey’s selfless assertions aren’t really selfless at all—they do reflect *some* kind of belief on the part of the asserter.

In Chapter 11, Matt Weiner examines a coordinate system of norms governing belief. Specifically, he understands epistemic norms involving (at least) two spectra of epistemic viewpoints. First, he considers ideal and practical viewpoints. The ideal perspective asks for the best way to

believe (in perfect epistemic circumstances) whereas the practical viewpoint asks what I should believe (in my particular epistemic circumstances). Second, there are thin and thick viewpoints. The thin perspective considers only the proposition in question in isolation and assesses whether one should believe it. But the thicker perspective includes more than just the isolated proposition when determining what should be believed. Both the ideal/practical and thin/thick viewpoints come in degrees: they are spectra of epistemic analyses rather than discrete points.

Daniel Whiting discusses practical and epistemic aims or reasons one might have for belief. A puzzle arises: even if we have tremendous practical considerations in favor of a belief, they won't override the epistemic credentials for/against the belief in question. Whiting suggests an intuitive picture: we have two sets of aims—one practical and one epistemic—that clash in these cases. But if this picture is accurate, why, then, do the epistemic aims we have always trump any practical aims we could have with respect to belief? The answer: Whiting argues that the 'distinct but competing epistemic and practical aims' picture is false. My epistemic aims involve believing  $p$  only if my evidence supports  $p$ , but we have this evidential aim because having evidence that  $p$  satisfies my aim to have practical reasons for action. Thus, the practical perspective contains and determines the epistemic perspective (since the aim of having evidence arises from aims for practical reasons). This is why the practical perspective can't override the epistemic: the former determines the latter.

In the final chapter, Sarah Wright develops a virtue-theoretic approach to the norms of assertion and belief. She follows the Stoic distinction between a *telos* (overall goal/aim) and *skopos* (immediate goal/aim). The *telos* of an archer is to shoot arrows well and skillfully whereas the *skopos* for an archer is to hit *this particular* bulls-eye *now*. On a virtue perspective, my *telos* is to act/believe/assert in accordance with the intellectual virtues (=my overall goal) and my *skopos* is to act/believe/assert in accordance with my immediate, particular aim (most often with the truth). Thus, there's a dual nature to the norm of belief: I should believe in accordance with virtues (*telos*) and I should believe in accordance with any particular epistemic aim—most typically with the aim of truth (*skopos*).

There's a great deal to like about this collection. First and foremost, it covers many ways that epistemic norms are relevant to belief, assertion, and action. Epistemic normativity can cover a huge amount of territory given the pervasiveness of norms in various aspects of life, and these papers reflect how epistemology can engage such variety. And, second, the collection is well-balanced. There seems a fairly equitable focus on the various norms of belief, assertion, and action. This isn't a book on the norm of assertion (for instance) with some discussion of the norms of belief and action. All three elements of normativity, thus, are well-represented. And, as one would expect given the roster, the quality of each chapter is uniform and of the highest level.

I have only one negative about the overall collection. The chapters are grouped alphabetically and without grouping or parts. Reading the book, thus, means moving from one topic to another and back several times. This makes the experience of going through the book a bit jarring: one has to shift from a focus on assertion to action to assertion to belief and a mix of them over and over. It would have made for a more consistent or coherent collection (reading-wise) to group them thematically—at least loosely. But, while this is a negative, it doesn't undermine the overall contribution the book makes to the literature on epistemic normativity and the quality of the chapters individually. As such, this book will be of interest to epistemologists, philosophers of mind, and even

some ethicists interested in normativity. For philosophers in those fields, this book is excellent and highly recommended.

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