

Brett Coppenger and Michael Bergmann, eds. *Intellectual Assurance: Essays on Traditional Epistemic Internalism*. Oxford University Press 2016. 256 pp. \$74.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780198719632).

The debate between epistemic internalism and epistemic externalism has been of central significance in contemporary analytic epistemology over the past several decades. It began as a disagreement about the nature of knowledge, developed as a dispute about epistemic justification, and is now often thought to concern meta-epistemological questions about which epistemological projects should be pursued. But these days there is an increasingly common view that externalists have won the day, and that it is now time to move on. Within this context, the essays in *Intellectual Assurance: Essays on Epistemic Internalism* are offered as a collaborative diagnostic of epistemic internalism, an effort, as Brett Coppenger puts it in his helpful introduction, ‘to test again the staying power of traditional internalism to see if this once historically prominent view deserves another look... or, if instead it is time for traditional internalism to be left by the wayside’ (2). By ‘traditional internalism,’ Coppenger has in mind an account of justification that he characterizes according to its aim: ‘The fundamental feature of traditional internalism ... is the goal of grounding justification in direct confrontation with reality in a way that allows for a philosophically satisfying account of justification’ (6). This philosophically satisfying account of justification amounts to achieving a sort of *intellectual assurance*. Thus, it seems that a defense of traditional internalism should both include an account of why one ought to aim for intellectual assurance, and also offer some reason for thinking it is possible to make some progress toward this aim.

However, instead of providing a single assessment of traditional internalism, Coppenger and Bergmann offer an edited volume that contains a valuable collection of significant contemporary work on the internalism/externalism debate, written by many leading philosophers working in this area. There are twelve chapters, organized into three parts. Part I addresses traditional internalism and non-inferentially justified belief, Part II takes up inferentially justified belief, and Part III focuses on skepticism.

The primary focus in most of the essays is Richard Fumerton’s work. (Many of the chapters were originally presented at the 2014 Orange Beach Epistemology Workshop, where Fumerton’s work was the theme.) Fumerton is given the last word in the final chapter, where he responds to many of the positions developed throughout the book.

In Part I, Peter Markie leads with an evaluation of the prospects of Confrontation Foundationalism, the view that ‘non-inferential justification results from a “direct confrontation” with reality, in which the fact that makes true the belief is right “there before consciousness”’ (26). Markie argues that to be successful, Confrontational Foundationalism must properly navigate the distinction between direct awareness of a truth-making fact and awareness of that fact *as assurance of one’s belief*. Furthermore, the current theories on offer, including Fumerton’s and Laurence Bonjour’s, fail to do so.

Next, Chris Tucker develops a compelling argument that acquaintance theories cannot account for fallible non-inferential justification since acquaintance is a success notion. Tucker focuses on the versions of acquaintance theories defended by Fumerton and Ali Hasan, and here is one place where the reader is left to wonder whether the problem is limited to Fumerton’s acquaintance theory, or whether the problem arises for any theory that cashes out non-inferential justification by a success notion (acquaintance or otherwise). Clearly the latter casts significantly more doubt on the prospects for traditional internalism than the former.

Matthias Steup focuses on the *internalist demand for non-accidental truth*, by which he means that ‘a belief, if both justified and true, is not accidentally true when judged from within the subject’s perspective’ (63). Steup addresses Fumerton’s acquaintance theory within the context of other internalist theories, giving a helpful discussion of holistic vs. monistic theories of justification, as well as a comparison of acquaintance to phenomenal conservatism and internalist reliabilism. Steup argues that acquaintance is not necessary for foundational justification.

Berit Brogaard defends phenomenal dogmatism, a version of epistemic internalism that she claims is able to withstand skeptical challenges and, at the same time, is reconcilable with a representational view of perception. Brogaard defends *seemings* in contrast to Fumertonian *acquaintances*, and she offers an interesting critique of naïve realism.

Susanna Schellenberg’s chapter is an abbreviated version of a previously published paper ‘Experience and Evidence’ (2013, *Mind*, 122, 699-747). Her primary focus is on defending an externalist conception of phenomenal evidence. She provides an account of why sensory states can be evidence. Schellenberg doesn’t directly engage Fumerton’s acquaintance theory, but her piece is a helpful exploration of the prospects of externalism for solving many of the issues raised in the other chapters in Part I.

Part II addresses non-inferential justification. Trent Dougherty makes the case that his brand of evidentialism is preferable to Fumerton and Humer’s versions of internalism. He defends his ‘deflationary account of the difference between inferential and non-inferential justification’ by focusing on how evidentialism keeps the subjective and the objective in the right places (142).

Michael Huemer argues that his appearance theory can account for particular cases of inferential justification that give Fumerton’s acquaintance theory trouble. His chapter includes a helpful exploration of the difference between acquaintance and appearance, noting that acquaintances are by definition successful while appearances can be mistaken. (This distinction is also relevant to Tucker’s chapter). He also articulates six constraints on an adequate theory of inferential justification and argues that his appearance theory can meet each constraint and also avoid skepticism.

While it is already clear that skepticism is a concern throughout the book, Part III takes up skeptical concerns directly. Sanford Goldberg presents several thought experiments intended to show that any theory of justification that is ‘demon-proof,’ or immune from tampering by an evil demon, is philosophically uninteresting. As Fumerton notes in his reply in the final chapter, it’s not clear that Goldberg’s cases succeed as the intuition pumps they are intended to be. But Goldberg’s critique certainly casts doubt on whether the aim of the traditional internalist is worth pursuing.

Ted Poston addresses how an acquaintance theory might deal with the justification of beliefs about the past, a crucial issue for any epistemological theory given that almost all our knowledge is in some way dependent upon memory. He argues that as an explanation for beliefs that require memory, epistemic conservatism is far superior to an acquaintance theory.

Duncan Pritchard and Christopher Ranalli address Fumerton’s metaepistemological skepticism, showing how it is distinct from Barry Stroud’s version of skepticism. They argue that Fumerton’s main objection to externalism is not that externalists cannot provide intellectual assurance, but that the externalist account of how non-inferential justification is possible is unsatisfying. In contrast, Stroud’s solution to the skeptical problem is resolved not by obtaining philosophical assurance, but by blocking skeptical hypotheses by giving an account of perceptual knowledge in which ‘the philosophical problem of the external world cannot emerge’ (222).

Ernest Sosa defends the acceptability of a certain kind of circularity in an account of knowledge. According to Sosa, an account ‘that would lay out justifying reasons for every bit of our knowledge, and would do so without circularity or infinite regress’ is something that not even God could provide (232). He claims that we should treat cases of perception and intuition alike,

and he defends the use of one's faculties to provide an account of what justifies the use of those very faculties, within certain constraints.

While there is much to say about a book of this breadth, I will focus on a single critical point. Any assessment of traditional internalism would almost certainly require a detailed discussion of Fumerton's work, especially given that he is one of its most prominent defenders. However, it's not clear that this volume succeeds as a referendum on traditional internalism. Instead, its main contribution is as a (still significant) referendum on Fumerton's work.

Some of the critiques, such as those developed by Markie, Goldberg, and Sosa, clearly address the broader traditional internalist project. However, other chapters, such as Poston's and Huemer's, are in-house quibbles between internalist theories. For yet other chapters, it is not altogether clear whether the critiques of Fumerton extend beyond Fumerton's particular views to the traditional internalist project more generally. For instance, is Brogaard's phenomenal dogmatism an alternative way to develop traditional internalism, or does it in some way conflict with the traditional internalist project as Coppenger conceives it? How might Shellenberg's account of evidence and perceptual experience accommodate some of the concerns that motivate traditional internalism? Do Pritchard and Ranalli show us something about the aims of traditional internalism when they argue that Fumerton's dissatisfaction with externalism is with its account of non-inferential justification? It is left up to the reader to disentangle which of the many critiques developed here have general application to traditional internalism and which are aimed more narrowly at Fumerton's acquaintance theory.

Despite this limitation in providing a robust assessment of traditional internalism, this volume does indeed identify many of the serious challenges facing a successful traditional internalist theory, Fumerton's or otherwise. As such, it is an essential resource for anyone interested in these issues.

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