David Owens. *Normativity and Control*. Oxford University Press 2017. 224 pp. $55.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780198713234).

David Owens' seminal work *Reason without Freedom,* published almost two decades ago, offered a novel way of thinking about philosophical problems posed by epistemic norms, connecting them to those that arise from other forms of normative assessment, including moral assessment. The issues he first discussed there are incorporated in this valuable collection of essays, which demonstrate Owens' sustained effort to make sense of the idea that human conduct is guided by norms. It contains ten chapters, eight of which are previously published material and appear with minor changes, one new essay ('Human Testimony'), one revised version of a previously published essay ('Value and Epistemic Normativity'), as well as a substantial introduction. The book has four parts: Part 1 discusses the differences between epistemic and practical normativity; Part 2 offers a new interpretation of Cartesian scepticism; Part 3 engages with the ideas of practical freedom and habitual agency; Part 4 is dedicated to the issue of testimony.

The book's central claim is that we control what we do in a way that we don't control what we think and feel, and that different forms or degrees of control underwrite different forms or degrees of responsibility. Owens also argues that although we can't control our beliefs and emotions as we control our actions and intentions, there is an underlying unity that characterizes the norms we are guided by; they derive their authority from a common source: human interest. The rationality of our beliefs, for example, bears on our interests, partly because we want to know how to feel about the past or the future. As Owens says: 'The value of belief and knowledge lies in its enabling a form of emotional engagement with the world' (99).

In discussing the phenomena that are governed by norms, Owens consider emotions in a way in which they are not taken to be a marginal case and he carefully draws certain analogies between beliefs and emotions, contrasting both with intention and action. My comments will mostly concern the author's hypothesis that 'the difference between knowledge and ignorance matters to us because the capacity to have doxastic emotions matters to us' (101). This, by no means, aims to undermine the scope and depth of Owens' engagement with what he identifies as interconnected problems of epistemic normativity: control, scepticism, testimony and authority. Indeed, it would be difficult to do justice to even a part of it in the short space given here.

Owens' unorthodox interpretation of Cartesian scepticism, expounded in Part 2, is particularly illuminating. He links the problem of control with the Cartesian demand for certainty, arguing that the sceptical hypothesis plays a secondary role in Cartesian scepticism, where its primary monitor is the demand for certainty (116). He argues that while sceptics insist that we can reasonably form a belief only where we have conclusive evidence for its truth, and while most our beliefs are based on inconclusive evidence, Descartes accepts that there are valid norms telling us how to behave under uncertainty. Owens notes that for Descartes certainty is a control issue, and that scepticism exposes the limits and the presuppositions of rational control (129).

Those interested in the rationality of the emotions would have, perhaps, wanted to hear more than is discussed by Owens about the norms that apply specifically to emotions. However, this can hardly be taken as a criticism of his overall project. While Owens takes for granted that there are normative states of affairs and epistemic normativity, as well as norms characteristic of belief, he candidly admits, from the start, that he does not offer any positive conception of how belief might be guided by reason. His aim is to formulate a conception of practical freedom and to show how it has no application to belief and emotion.

Owens proposes, in Part 1, a conception of reflective control, which refers to the faculty of judgement, and to the part of our rational mind that is free in a way that others are not. He maintains that a rational believer may lack the capacity to determine what they believe by simply making a judgement about what they ought to believe. By contrast, we can, in virtue of being rational agents, *determine* what to do by making a practical judgement about what we ought to do.

Practical judgement, Owens, notes, can be a source of motivation available to someone *qua* rational agent. Some people can get themselves to do what they judge they ought to do by reminding themselves that doing otherwise would demonstrate a lack of self-control. True enough, we can decide, say, to visit a friend in a hospital by simply reflecting on what we ought to do, in a way that we cannot decide what to think and feel about this friend by simply reflecting on what we ought to think and feel about him or her. But an appeal to practical freedom and reflective control, as Owens understands it, does little to address the kind of criticism—a notion bound up with normativity—directed at someone whose decision to visit a friend lacks a reflection on the value of friendship.

Owens' interest, nonetheless, is not to examine the moral motives. His conceptual distinction between practical judgement about what we ought to do and a belief about what we ought to do serves to illuminate our capacity to conform our actions to our practical judgements. Our failure to exercise this capacity constitutes a failure of rationality. And unlike in cases of akrasia that demonstrate the failure of self-control, Owens argues that epistemic akrasia—cases where a person's first order belief diverges from their higher-order judgements about what it would be reasonable for them to believe—is impossible since it cannot satisfy the reflective control condition. We cannot freely and deliberatively form beliefs in accordance with, or against, our judgements about what we should believe.

However, the *rationality* of the belief that p, Owens contents, does not solely depend on the strength of evidence for or against p, but on the desirability of forming a belief about whether p. His objection to evidentialism—the view that rational belief should be based on evidential considerations alone—seems puzzling; surely, our beliefs are about the world and not about the merits of believing. Owens recognises this, but he insists on the normative importance of non-evidential concerns and an agent's interest in forming the relevant belief. Crucially, he maintains, when we are criticized for having irrational beliefs and emotions, this is not because we are expected to control these states by making judgements about whether they are reasonable. Thus our beliefs are subject to attributive, rather than substantive, responsibility. Owens follows Scanlon in appealing to this distinction and argues that attributive responsibility does not presuppose reflective control (28).

Owens' analysis provides a credible response to Joseph Raz's worry (in *From Normativity to Responsibility*, Oxford University Press, 2011) that since it is sometimes in our interest to adopt irrational beliefs and emotions, we should infer from this that it is a mistake to ground epistemic normativity in value. It might come as a disappointment, though, that much of Owens's discussion of the rationality of emotions focuses on fear and anger, while comparatively little is said about emotions like love, empathy and resentment. This is partly dictated by his specific aims; in discussing the rationality of fear, for example, he notes that action, but not fear, is subject to the will (chapter 5). As Owens notes, the rationality of the action is a function of the desirability of performing it. In contrast, fear is not a function of the desirability of the fears' being felt. Also, while we can do something because we are paid to do so, we cannot fear 'at will.' The point here is that the extent of our practical freedom cannot turn on what we subject to the will.

Granted, Owens' distinction between what he calls doxastic emotions like pride, disgust, and shame, which he contrasts with fear and hope, leaves open important questions about the normativity of the emotions. Is it necessarily the case that, as he says, to fear that p is not to be entitled to act as

if p is true (95)? Couldn't many emotions, including fear and hope, actively contribute to knowledge in virtue of their capacity to, somehow, detect the presence of reasons? Owens registers the fact that 'emotional bafflement drives inquiry' (101). But although it may be true that knowledge and rational beliefs bear on the importance of our emotional lives, our natural emotional responses, themselves, can sometimes provide a direct route to knowledge.

Of course, as Owens recognizes, we need beliefs that are fairly constant over time and largely shared with those around us to orient our emotions. But quite often, our emotional responses, intertwined with fast intuitive processes that may be called a form of reasoning, facilitate the process of moral transformation. Such was the case with Huckleberry Finn. Crucially, our moral convictions, independently of social conventions, can be revised in the light of better (emotional) knowledge. Such intuitive emotional responses, assent to which is action, rather than belief, surely, bear on the content of our epistemic norms, and this is something which Owens does not consider.

In Part 4, Owens ably explains our intuition that we can be justified in believing what others tell us. The fact that it is reasonable for us to believe that p even if we have no way of assessing how reasonable it is to believe that p, to follow Owens, is explained by the fact that in *inheriting* others' belief, we inherit whatever justification they have for it, even when we may be unaware of how it is to be justified. In this sense we endorse and are entitled to their beliefs. An advantage of the inheritance model of testimony he defends, over the competing assurance model, is that it need not make a reference to the exercise of reflective control and reasoning (213). However, while the transmission of belief by testimony depends on our shared human emotional psychology (219), an account of whatever it is that is good or desirable about expressing those beliefs and emotions ought to reflect a plausible account of the emotions' unique epistemic and motivating role.

This observation is not meant to expose a limitation of Owens' book but perhaps an aspect of its accomplishment. Owens' careful analysis, which avoids the perils of overexposure, marks a significant advance in our understanding of norms, social practices and habits, and the issues such as self-knowledge, the aim of belief, and not least, the role of emotion. Owens' discussion of Cartesian scepticism makes us question the assumption that reason requires a form of intellectual freedom and that rationality and epistemic responsibility are present only when our belief is under the control of reflection. Perhaps, as Owens notes, this assumption is false: this being an important lesson of Cartesian scepticism (131). As he says, 'much of our life manifests our rationality without being a form of free agency' (86). It is a further question, positively informed by Owens' book, and which exposes the limitations of Cartesian understanding of the mind, how the cooperative interaction between reason and emotion manifests an aspect of our rational, and moral, mind.

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