

RICHARD FUMERTON *EPISTEMOLOGY*. MALDEN, MA: BLACKWELL PUBLISHING 2006. PP. x + 145. (CLOTH: ISBN 978-1-4051-2566-6); (PAPER: ISBN 978-1-4051-2567-3)

This book will interest those who teach undergraduate epistemology, like the idea of using a single-author text, but are unsatisfied with the current options. It differs, in a few ways, from books like Richard Feldman's *Epistemology*, Robert Audi's *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, Laurence Bonjour's *Epistemology*, and Adam Morton's *A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge*.

Chapter 1 begins with propositional knowledge and the evaluation of epistemic reasons for belief. The rest of the chapter draws a distinction between metaepistemology and applied epistemology. Applied epistemology is concerned with what we know and how we know it. Metaepistemology is concerned with what knowledge is. Though this makes metaepistemology more like normative ethics, Fumerton does not label it 'normative epistemology' because of his qualms with thinking of epistemology as normative – he returns to this issue in Chapter 3.

Newcomers to epistemology will find much of this book difficult, especially Chapter 2, "The Analysis of Knowledge". It begins with familiar reasons for including truth and belief conditions on knowledge. Fumerton says evidence is also needed. However, lottery cases suggest that the evidence must be strong enough that it *entails* the truth of the proposition believed. This coupled with Closure – the principle that if you know P and you know P entails Q, then

you are in a position to know Q – leads to skepticism. Fumerton argues against two ways out: contextualism and the subject-sensitive invariantism recently defended by Fantl and McGrath, Stanley, and Hawthorne. He goes on to suggest that knowledge does require truth-entailing evidence. Fumerton argues for this strong conception of knowledge on the grounds that it does a good job of handling the Gettier problem. Other solutions to the Gettier problem are covered: specifically, the no-false-lemma response, Nozick-style tracking, and the causal theory of knowledge. Much of this will be too difficult for newcomers, especially the intricate discussion of how the lottery puzzle, Closure, and competing views about the semantics of “knows” relate to one another.

Chapter 3, “Epistemic Rationality and its Structure”, begins with an argument that the concept of an epistemic reason for believing is not a normative concept. Fumerton then provides a useful overview of the main positions regarding the structure of epistemic rationality. In the end, he favors foundationalism over coherentism, infinitism, and skepticism. This sets up the next chapters: Chapters 4 and 5 go on to investigate Internalist and Externalist Foundationalism, emphasizing their accounts of noninferential justification; Chapter 6 looks at how we expand our knowledge via inference.

Chapter 4, “Traditional (Internalist) Foundationalism”, raises difficulties for familiar ways of drawing the internalism/externalism distinction. Fumerton opts for an unorthodox view: the main internalist thesis is that justifiers are non-natural properties, while the main externalist thesis is that justifiers are natural

properties. His own internalist proposal is an acquaintance view on which S is noninferentially justified in believing P only if S is acquainted with the fact that makes P true; later, we learn that S must also be acquainted with the fact that this acquaintance state corresponds to the fact that makes P true. The acquaintance relation is a non-natural unanalyzable primitive. Since one can only stand-in this relation to facts, it yields the truth-entailing justification of Chapter 2.

Chapter 5, “Externalist Versions of Foundationalism”, takes up the early Goldman’s causal theory, Nozick’s tracking theory, and the later Goldman’s reliabilism. Each theory is carefully spelled out, and two kinds of criticisms are discussed. One brings revisions to the basic formulations of the theories. The other points to deeper difficulties with the general idea of epistemic externalism. The latter are illustrated with Goldman’s reliabilism. Here, Fumerton reviews the new evil demon problem, Bonjour’s Norman case, and the charge that reliabilism is unable to give those who have skeptically-induced worries assurance that skepticism is false. At the end of it all, Fumerton is happy to split differences: reliabilists are correct about one desideratum, while internalists are correct about another.

Chapter 6, “Inferential Justification”, takes up an intriguing issue. To be justified in believing the conclusion of an argument, do I have to possess a reason to think my premises support the truth of what I believe; or is it enough that my premises in fact support the truth of what I believe? According to Fumerton, requiring that my evidence in fact support the truth of what I believe results in

some of the same problems that plague externalist accounts of noninferential justification. So he opts for requiring that I need to possess the relevant kind of reason. However, if possessing such reasons involved cognizing a distinct argument, a regress would be triggered. So instead it involves acquaintance with probability relations between the premises and conclusion, relations that hold necessarily and are known a priori.

The last chapter is on skepticism. Skeptical arguments are construed as first isolating our evidence. The evidence we have for our beliefs about the external world consists in seeming states. The skeptic then challenges us to establish that this evidence either deductively, inductively, or abductively supports our external world beliefs. The skeptic contends that no deductive connections are plausible, that attempts to establish inductive connections of the enumerative variety end up begging the question (for Hume's reasons), and that attempts at establishing abductive connections have to eventually make appeal to enumerative inductions (where they then beg the question). That leaves two options: reject the demand that we establish any connection, thereby foregoing assurance that our beliefs are epistemically rational; or adopt Fumerton's view that we are acquainted with relations of making probable, which now hold between (non-doxastic) seeming states and the basic beliefs that they make probable.

Though the book is clearly opinionated, Fumerton is fair to other positions and he is not overly concerned with persuading the reader of his own views. In all,

the book is more engaging for being opinionated. However, it is difficult in spots, and in some spots it will be far too difficult for most beginners.

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