

**Justification without Awareness.** Michael Bergmann. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp ix, 252.

This is an excellent book. Bergmann's goal is to argue for a proper functionalist theory of justification. Along the way he argues for several principal claims: (1) internalist theories of justification face a destructive dilemma; (2) evidential fittingness is a contingent relation between a body of evidence and a doxastic response; and (3) proper functionalism can handle standard objections to externalism regarding epistemic circularity and skepticism. These three claims fit together to argue for proper functionalism. (1) implies that internalism is false. (2) implies that a thesis characteristic of certain non-externalist theories—evidential fittingness is a necessary relation—is false. Moreover, the reasons given for (2) support a proper functionalist analysis of evidential fittingness. (3) implies that proper functionalism fares better than other versions of externalism (e.g., reliablism).

The book divides into two parts, the first part argues for (1) and the second part argues for (2) and (3). In Part I, chapters 1 & 2 develop and extend the dilemma attacking internalism. Chapter 3 addresses two versions of mentalism, arguing that mentalism is distinct from internalism and, moreover, that it is false. The last chapter of Part I argues that there's no good argument from deontologism to internalism. Part II begins with a chapter that advances the argument for (2). This chapter concludes with a partial proper functionalist account. The account is extended in chapter 6 to include a no-defeater condition, a chapter that includes a valuable discussion on defeat. The last two chapters address the epistemic circularity charge and the objection that externalist theories can not adequately handle skepticism. This skeletal overview by its nature fails to mention many valuable insights and arguments Bergmann offers along the way.

I turn now to a few critical remarks. I'll begin with several general points. First, Bergmann claims that the internalist-externalist (I-E) distinction is not exhaustive (p. 57). For instance, he views mentalism as a theory that is neither internalist nor externalist (pp. 55-7; 70). To a certain extent one can classify theories as one sees fit, but preferably one's classificatory categories should partition the relevant domain. That the I-E distinction, on Bergmann's analysis, doesn't partition epistemological theories suggests that Bergmann's characterization of internalism doesn't reveal its deepest motivation. Second, the chapter on deontologism is odd given the overall dialectic. The chapter considers another way to impose an awareness requirement on justification given that the internalist cannot rely on the Subject's Perspective Objection (SPO, see p. 12) (p. 77). But even supposing this works the resulting position is very curious. The position would impose an awareness requirement on justification even though it is possible to satisfy it without being aware (at all) of what a belief has going for it. Thus to the extent an awareness requirement seems plausible at all, it seems that it must avoid the SPO. Consequently, it seems to be a mistake to consider an awareness requirement on justification that does not avoid the SPO. Third, Bergmann's discussion at several key points leaves out any discussion of coherentism (there are three mentions of coherentism (pp. 13, 25, 186)). This is understandable given the current epistemological atmosphere but coherentism does bear on several key claims in Bergmann's argument. For instance, Bergmann relies heavily upon a regress argument for foundationalism (pp. 185 & 228). But coherentists are likely to object that the argument either is not valid or runs together

distinct ways of understanding inferentially justified belief. This is a smallish point but it does affect the generality Bergmann wishes to draw from his discussion of epistemic circularity and skepticism. Coherentists are likely to see that discussion as interesting but not exhausting the epistemological landscape.

I now address two specific concerns. The first concern is about (1). The dilemma Bergmann formulates begins by imposing an awareness requirement on internalism. Bergmann then observes that the awareness requirement is either strong or weak. But, he argues, strong awareness leads to vicious regress problems while weak awareness leads to the Subject's Perspective Objection (p. 12). The SPO is an objection that internalists use against externalist theories of justification. The objection is that if a subject is completely unaware of what a belief has going for it then the belief is not justified. So, Bergmann argues, unless internalists impose strong awareness then they fall prey to the same objection they spring on externalist theories.

My concern with the dilemma arises over Bergmann's application of the distinction between strong and weak awareness. As Bergmann formulates the distinction it is exhaustive. But as he applies the distinction he misses an important area in logical space. Here's the formulation:

All such awareness will either involve *conceiving* of the justification-contributor that is the object of awareness as being in some way relevant to the justification or truth of the belief or it won't (p. 13).

The former kind of awareness is *strong awareness* and the latter *weak awareness*. However, given the specific formulation of strong awareness, one needs to be careful not to run together strong awareness as Bergmann formulates it with another kind of awareness that does involve some conceiving. For instance, there is a small but significant distinction between

- (i) *conceiving* of the justification-contributor that is the object of awareness as being in some way relevant to the justification or truth of the belief

and

- (ii) *conceiving* of the justification-contributor that is the object of awareness in a way that *is* relevant to the justification or truth of the belief.

The difference between (i) and (ii) is that (i) requires, while (ii) does not, that one conceives of the justification contributor *as being in some way relevant to the justification or truth of the belief*. (ii) merely requires that one conceives of the justification contributor *in a way that \*is\* relevant to the justification or truth of the belief*. Because (i) is strong awareness, (ii) should be an instance of weak awareness. But when Bergmann discusses weak awareness he seems to ignore this possibility (see pp. 19-21). Ignoring this possibility, though, is central to the argument that weak awareness is liable to the SPO.

Lest this distinction be perceived as a mere technicality I will offer the barest sketch of a view that avoids the dilemma. The view is similar to a direct acquaintance view but instead of incorporating the notion of direct acquaintance the view incorporates the notion of recognitional awareness of the content of experience (“experience” is construed broadly to include intuition as well). Recognitional awareness is the most basic kind of awareness that guides intentional action. Recognitional awareness lies between mere perceptual representation that doesn’t guide intentional action and doxastic representation which requires justification. On this view justification requires that one is recognitionally aware of the content of an appropriate experience. For instance the basic empirical belief that there’s a cup of coffee before me is justified only if I am r-aware of the experiential content *there’s a cup of coffee*. A full development of this view awaits an article length treatment but it appears to avoid regress problems and the SPO. For instance, the SPO is avoided because the subject is not completely unaware of what the belief has going for it; she is aware of the content of an appropriate experience.

The second major concern regards the argument for (2), specifically the argument that evidential fittingness is not necessary. Bergmann formulates the Necessity thesis (N):

*Necessity*: the fittingness of doxastic response B to evidence E is an essential property of that response to that evidence (p. 112).

For the purposes of Bergmann’s argument the dialectic apropos (N) assumes that one’s evidence consists in accessible states or mental states (p. 111). The argument against (N) is by counterexample. Bergmann presents a case in which in the actual world doxastic response B to evidence E is not a fitting response but in some possible world doxastic response B is a fitting response to that evidence. It is important to keep in mind that the evidence E is exactly the same in both cases. The counterexample Bergmann presents involves possible cognizers who experience *olfactory sensations of the type [normal humans] experience when [normal humans] smell a meadow full of flowers* whenever they pick up a billiard ball and form the belief that *there is a smallish hard round object in my hand* (see pp. 115, 118-121). This belief is fitting, so Bergmann claims (p. 120). However, the same belief is an unfitting response to the same evidence in actual cognizers (p. 119). A significant feature in Bergmann’s case is that the responses are unlearned doxastic responses, i.e., non-inferential (see pp. 116-118).

This counterexample, though, is completely unpersuasive to advocates of a view of justification that holds that experiences have contents and that justification requires awareness of those contents. On this view the unlearned doxastic response of the possible cognizers is incongruent with the content of their experiences. Bergmann follows up the counterexample with a lengthy section defending the counterexample against intentionalism (pp. 121-130). This section, though, doesn’t help with the present objection and I fear it defends a claim that is at odds with Bergmann’s argument against (N). In this section Bergmann formulates the claim

CE: It’s possible (and actual) for normal humans to have experience ME1 with propositional content of B1; and it’s possible for there to be cognizers

like those in the Reidian counterexample who have experience ME2 with the propositional content of B1 (p. 121).

The meaning of ME1, ME2, and B1 doesn't matter for our purposes; all that matters is that this is a case in which two different experiences—different in phenomenal character—have the same propositional content. Bergmann tries to defend this possibility against intentionalism. But I think Bergmann should reject CE, at least as a way of understanding his counterexample. Suppose we read his counterexample through the lens of CE and the account of justification I've outlined. In this case Bergmann's case of the possible cognizers mentioned above doesn't show that (N) is false; for the doxastic response fits the content of the experience. The content of the experience of the possible cognizers is that there's a billiard ball. There is a difference of phenomenal character between our experiences and the experiences of these possible cognizers. But the phenomenal character of experience is irrelevant to justification because it lacks any content. In order to get a counterexample to (N) Bergmann can't give a case in which the contents of the experiences are different, for that changes the evidence. Rather he needs to demonstrate a case in which the evidence is exactly the same but in one possible scenario the doxastic response is fitting and in another the response is not fitting. But to those who hold a theory of justification in which the content of experience plays an important justificatory role it will be hard to countenance such cases.

These concerns shouldn't be taken to indicate any reservations about this book. The book clearly advances the debate on internalism and externalism. I hope that ongoing reflection on Bergmann's book continues to uncover further epistemological vistas.

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