

ments means that we spend less time providing positive reasons for accepting positions, and on relating different ideas to each other (p. 165). She also cites Peirce in support of the idea that "interactional cooperation offers a better means of acquiring knowledge than does adversarial exchange" (p. 172) because the truth is too large and complex for one person to discover it alone. I am inclined to agree with her about the capacity of adversarial exchange to find the truth. Often, philosophical interchanges succeed only in belittling participants and in trampling undeveloped ideas that could have been strengthened through cooperative exchange. Still, I can imagine philosophers protesting that adversarial discourse *is* a kind of cooperative exchange which does rely on joining forces to improve arguments and ideas by testing them against objections. My guess is that each of these two positions is partially correct, and that much will depend on the context, and the degree to which the conversational style is aggressive. Thinking about whether adversarial discourse really serves our own goals, and in what ways it is morally problematic, is a neglected but important task, and Ayim does well to focus our attention on these questions.

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In Defense of Pure Reason

LAURENCE BONJOUR

Cambridge Studies in Philosophy

New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, xiv + 232 pp., \$54.95, \$18.95 paper

Laurence Bonjour's *In Defense of Pure Reason* is must reading for anyone interested in the empiricism/rationalism debate, especially for anyone convinced that empiricism has won the day. In the pellucid prose that is a signature of Bonjour's work, it presents a compelling case for the indispensability of genuine rationalistic *a priori* justification, while providing a sustained critique of the empiricist alternatives which either restrict *a priori* justification to analytic propositions or deny the existence of such justification outright. The book would make an excellent addition to any upper-level undergraduate or graduate course on empiricism and rationalism. It would also be a useful addition to almost any epistemology seminar, since most recent books on epistemology have conspicuously little, if anything, to say about *a priori* justification and knowledge.

The book's primary aim is to defend a moderate rationalist view according to which *a priori* rational insight is a genuine, albeit fallible, source of epistemic justification and knowledge. The defense proceeds in three stages: (1) An argument from elimination is offered to show that moderate rationalism is the only viable non-sceptical account not only of *a priori* justification and knowledge, but of knowledge generally. (2) An intuitive argument is advanced based on the phenomenological plausibility with which the view accommodates a number of compelling examples of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. (3) A dialectical argument consisting of responses to a number of allegedly decisive objections to moderate rationalism is advanced not only to diffuse those objections, but also to refine and further demystify the view.

Stage 1 is philosophy at its finest. First, four possible stances with respect to *a priori* justification are identified: *Traditional rationalism* maintains (i) that *a priori* justification occurs when the mind directly or intuitively grasps a necessary fact about the nature or structure of reality, and (ii) that such justification is infallible and incapable of empirical refutation (pp. 15f.). *Moderate empiricism* maintains (i) that *a priori* justification is a genuine form of epistemic justification, but one only extending to tautologies and trivial analytic truths, and (ii) that being restricted to analytic propositions, such justification does not require any mysterious capacity for rational insight into the nature of reality (p. 18). *Radical empiricism* denies that there is any *a priori* justification (p. 19). Finally, *moderate rationalism* maintains that rational *a priori* insight can provide us with genuine *a priori* justification and knowledge which extends beyond mere analytic truths to fundamental truths about the nature of reality, but grants that such justification is fallible and defeasible, and may even be defeated by empirical considerations (p. 16).

Bonjour's argument from elimination begins with a devastating critique of the two empiricist alternatives, starting with moderate empiricism. If moderate empiricism is to succeed, there must be an account of "analyticity" capable of accounting for the *a priori* justification of all analytic propositions in a non-mysterious way which does not involve the sort of *a priori* insight posited by the rationalist. With a deft command of the literature on analyticity, Bonjour argues that there is no univocal account of *analyticity* capable of explaining all instances of *a priori* justification which does not itself ultimately depend on rationalistic *a priori* insight. For those unconvinced, Bonjour delivers a final devastating blow to moderate empiricism. He reminds us that moderate empiricism embraces:

(C1) All *a priori* knowable propositions are analytic.

But (C1) is neither empirically justifiable nor analytic. Hence, a defining claim of moderate empiricism, viz. (C1), is not justified on the criteria of justification that moderate empiricism itself lays down. Thus, Bonjour rightly concludes, moderate empiricism is self-referentially incoherent, since according to its own criteria of justification one is not justified in accepting it (p. 59).

Bonjour's critique of radical empiricism winds us through the labyrinth of Quine's philosophy from "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" to *Word and Object* to "Epistemology Naturalized." Along the way, Bonjour argues that Quine's epistemology (i) lacks the theoretical means to explain why scientific beliefs are epistemologically preferable to occult beliefs (p. 88), and (ii) entails a robust form of scepticism which not only precludes *a priori* knowledge, but even precludes most of the empirical knowledge which Quine holds so dear, since it cannot account for the justification of empirical claims that are not strictly observational in character (pp. 89-96). In short, if radical empiricism is correct, our knowledge is restricted to direct observation reports. The most devastating criticism comes when Bonjour notes that radical empiricism is committed to:

(C2) There are no *a priori* justifiable or knowable propositions.

But (C2) cannot be supported by direct experience. Since radical empiricism holds that a belief is justified only if it is supported by direct experience, it follows that

one of radical empiricism's defining theses, viz. (C2), is not justified, according to radical empiricism's own criterion of justification. Thus, like its more moderate counterpart, radical empiricism appears self-refuting.¹

Bonjour demonstrates the untenability of traditional rationalism via examples which undermine its infallibility thesis. Two particularly compelling examples are: (1) Euclidean geometry—once universally thought to self-evidently describe the necessary character of space—appears to have been *empirically* refuted by the use of non-Euclidean geometry in the theory of General Relativity; and (2) naive set theory—also previously thought to be self-evident—was refuted by Russell's paradox. With the collapse of moderate empiricism, radical empiricism, and traditional rationalism, the only hope for a viable non-sceptical epistemology lies in moderate rationalism.

Having succeeded in showing moderate rationalism's indispensability if scepticism is to be avoided, Bonjour sets out to develop a defensible version of the view. Those familiar with Bonjour's earlier work (e.g., 1978, 1980, 1985), in which he defends an internalistic coherence theory with respect to empirical justification, will find his current externalistic foundationalist account of *a priori* justification surprising. In the present book, Bonjour maintains that we have rational *a priori* insights which allow us to see or grasp *in a direct and unmediated way* that certain claims cannot fail to be true (p. 101). These direct insights into the necessity of certain claims, though not infallible, do provide us with *prima facie* justification for these claims. To help us appreciate the fallible nature of such insights, Bonjour distinguishes *apparent rational insight* from *genuine rational insight*. When a proposition *seems* necessary to a person, even after careful reflection, that person has an *apparent rational insight* into that proposition's necessity (p. 112). An apparent rational insight is *genuine* only if it involves the sort of authentic grasp of the necessary character of reality that ensures truth (p. 113). It is *apparent* rational insight which provides the basis for *a priori* justification, Bonjour argues, because:

To insist that *a priori* epistemic justification requires a *genuine* rational insight . . . would make it impossible to tell whether a given claim was justified in this way or not without knowing independently whether or not the claim of necessity was correct—thus making the appeal to rational insight entirely useless as an independent and self-contained basis for justification. (p. 113)

But here is the rub. Not all apparent-but-non-genuine rational insights confer justification on their target propositions, only *internally correctable*² apparent-but-non-genuine rational insights do so. Bonjour maintains that an apparent-but-non-genuine rational insight which is *ONLY externally correctable* confers no *a priori* justification on its target proposition, despite the fact that it will continue to *seem* as if it does to the person having that insight (p. 128).

Such a view is puzzling. First, it is difficult to see what the epistemologically relevant difference between a *non-corrected-but-internally-correctable-apparent-rational-insight* and a *non-corrected-only-externally-correctable-apparent-rational-insight* is supposed to be, since both yield false beliefs. Second, once one grants that justification-conferring-apparent-rational-insights [JCARIs] are internally, introspectively, cognitively, and phenomenologically indistinguishable from non-justification-conferring-apparent-rational-insights [NJCARIs], one has *ipso facto*

conceded the impossibility of determining whether one possesses a JCARI or an NJCARI. If one cannot distinguish JCARIs from NJCARIs, then one is never in a position to assert, of a given apparent-rational-insight, that it justifies its target proposition.

The only reason offered for why *only*-externally-correctable-apparent-but-non-genuine-insights fail to confer justification is that in such situations the person's "grasp of what is really going on is simply too defective to have any genuine epistemic force" (p. 128). What really seems to drive Bonjour to this position vis-à-vis ONLY-externally-correctable-mistaken-insights is his conviction that there must be a "truth connection," i.e., an internal connection between epistemic justification and truth (p. 1). But this same conviction is the impetus behind those other forms of externalism regarding justification that he continues to repudiate.³ True, Bonjour could avoid the problem by sticking to his internalistic guns and insisting that all apparent rational insights confer justification on their target propositions, but he could only do so by foregoing the truth connection which he takes to be the defining characteristic of epistemic justification. It is to Bonjour's credit that he follows the argument through and does not take the easy way out. His willingness to follow the argument where it leads, even if that means abandoning some of his earlier views, is laudable and is indicative of the philosophical sincerity with which he approaches every subject in the book.

Bonjour defends positions on many other important and controversial topics which space limitations preclude me from discussing in any detail, but, just to whet your appetite, some of these include: his denial of the need for a metajustification of the truth-conduciveness of our *a priori* reasons, his attack on conceptual role semantics, his rejection of the symbolic conception of thought, his "dual-universal" account of our *a priori* insights into the nature of universals, and his rationalist "solution" to the problem of induction.

To be sure, there is much in Bonjour's book with which one might disagree (though I know of no worthwhile book in philosophy of which the same cannot be said), but there is much more to agree with and to learn from than there is to disagree with. His insightful critique of empiricism is bound to wake even the most soundly sleeping empiricists from their empiricistic slumbers. His argument from elimination makes a compelling case for thinking that some version of moderate rationalism must be true if scepticism is to be avoided. Finally, he offers a plausible *prima facie* argument for thinking that *a priori* justification is indispensable to the philosophical enterprise itself. While his positive account does not provide us with all the answers, after reading his book we have a much better idea of the direction in which those answers must lie.

Notes

- 1 Bonjour notes the peculiar dialectical situation which anyone arguing against radical empiricism faces. Since no appeal to direct experience has any bearing on the possibility or impossibility of *a priori* justification, any attempt at the direct refutation of radical empiricism would have to appeal to *a priori* insight and, hence, would be question-begging (p. 63). He goes on to note, however, that just as there is no direct experience which could refute radical empiricism, there is also no direct experience which could support radical empiricism (p. 63). He

- concludes that "no account of the justification of the main radical empiricist thesis that is not in direct conflict with its truth seems to be possible" (p. 63).
- 2 An apparent-but-non-genuine rational insight is *internally correctable* provided "further reflection on the very state or process that led to the mistaken result is capable of revealing that it was a mistake and of replacing it with the correct result" (p. 116), whereas an apparent-but-non-genuine rational insight is *only externally correctable* if it can be corrected only by appeal to some criterion or standard that is external to the state itself (p. 116). He compares an *only* externally correctable rational insight with its perceptual analogue, a complete and systematic hallucination such that no amount of reflection could ever detect its non-veridicality (p. 116).
 - 3 Bonjour maintains that externalist theories of justification and knowledge "are merely wrong-headed and ultimately uninteresting evasions of the central epistemological issues" (p. 1, fn. 1).

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Introduction à l'Éthique de Spinoza. La seconde partie : la réalité mentale

PIERRE MACHEREY

Collection «Les grands livres de la philosophie»

Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, 418 p.

Depuis son important *Hegel ou Spinoza* publié en 1979, Pierre Macherey s'est progressivement imposé comme l'une des figures les plus importantes du renouveau spinoziste. La publication de cinq volumes d'*Introduction à l'Éthique de Spinoza* aux Presses Universitaires de France de 1994 à 1998, dont celui-ci est l'avant-dernier, confirme sa place désormais préminente parmi les grands interprètes français. Or Macherey nous assure dans son introduction ne justement pas vouloir imposer une «interprétation», qui viendrait se superposer à la lettre de ce qu'écrit Spinoza, mais bien au contraire ouvrir, à partir d'une étude littérale de l'*Éthique*, un champ d'interprétation dont il se contenterait d'indiquer les bornes. Et ces