*Extended Rationality: A Hinge Epistemology*. By Annalisa Coliva. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. xi + 221. Price £60.00.) [[1]](#footnote-1)

In this interesting book Annalisa Coliva develops an account of the structure of justification inspired by Wittgenstein’s epistemology, and reveals its significance for many contemporary problems.

This ‘extended rationality’ view has two key components. The first is *moderatism* about perceptual warrants, and the second is *constitutivism* about epistemic rationality. Moderatism is the view that, absent defeaters, the appropriate course of experience can justify a proposition about a particular domain of beliefs (for example those about material objects) only in conjunction with a relevant, general, *unwarrantable* assumption, such as ‘there is an external world’ (p. 34). This is introduced as a middle way between *liberalism* – a view defended by Jim Pryor, according to which, absent defeaters, the appropriate course of experience alone is sufficient (and necessary) for justification – and *conservatism* – a view defended by Crispin Wright, according to which, absent defeaters, the appropriate course of experience can justify only in conjunction with a relevant, general, *warranted* assumption.

Constitutivism is the view that these general assumptions – which Coliva calls ‘hinges’, after Wittgenstein’s observation in *On Certainty* that they must remain fixed as something for our justificatory practices to ‘turn’ against (1969: §341) – are constitutive of epistemic rationality, and thus a) they are unwarrantable, and yet b) we are rationally mandated to (in some sense) accept them (p. 129). This is in contrast to views like Wright’s, on which a) is false, and to Hume and Strawson’s, on which b) is false.

In the first two chapters (pp. 18-56 & pp. 57-85) Coliva introduces moderatism, and some motivations for adopting it, by way of criticizing what she takes to be the alternative views. She argues that liberalism fails to overcome our “cognitive locality”, because experience by itself underdetermines the propositions which are the target of our beliefs (our experiences could be the same regardless of whether the relevant propositions are true or false), and so we need some further story which bridges the gap between experience and the world (pp. 25-6). Whilst conservatism purports to offer such a story, Coliva claims that the non-evidential nature of the warrants it provides means that they can’t “speak to the likely truth of” the hinges, and so they will not satisfactorily respond to skepticism (p. 33). Moderatism is thought to avoid both of these problems.

A small worry at this stage relates to Coliva’s characterisation of propositional warrants. When characterizing the three views of perceptual warrants (pp. 21, 30 & 34-6) she describes these as warrants that exist “in the abstract space of reasons”, i.e. completely detached from any subject. I think this characterization is problematic. Not only is it different from the orthodox characterisation in a way which Coliva doesn’t note (c.f. Turri 2010, where propositions are propositionally justified – in the orthodox sense – *for a particular subject*), but it also appears to be in conflict with Coliva’s own view. One of the lessons of constitutivism is that propositional warrants depend on the faculties and practices of the subject. Coliva’s main point (that propositional warrants, unlike doxastic ones, don’t require the relevant propositions to be entertained by the subject) still stands, but her characterization of propositional warrants is misleading nonetheless.

In chapter 3 (pp. 86-118), Coliva argues for the many positive features of moderatism. Primarily, it offers a novel way of understanding transmission failure: where Wright says that warrant for general propositions is necessary for the specific propositions entailed by them to be warranted, Coliva’s moderate thinks that the *assumption* of the general proposition is enough (pp.92-4). As a result it casts new light on the closure principle (it holds for all entailments with warrantable conclusions) (pp.101-7), on the problem of easy knowledge (pp. 108-9), and on bootstrapping arguments (pp. 109-113). An interesting result of this is that on Coliva’s view closure fails in some cases. She discusses how this differs from Duncan Pritchard’s (*forthcoming*) view, on which closure holds in all cases in which it applies, but applies in fewer cases than we might originally think (p. 106). Pritchard sees this as a positive feature of his view, but Coliva calls it out as being two strong, and offers a principled alternative.

In chapter 4 (pp. 119-152), she introduces the constitutivist aspect of the view and shows how it can deal with skepticism, closure, and so-called abominable conjunctions. She also defends it from two objections: that the view is a kind of relativism, and that her account fails to provide reasons to be rational. She also sketches out the minimalist notion of truth which her view requires.

I think that a number of the points she makes here are too quick, in particular when it comes to her treatment of relativism. Her general strategy is to show that alternative frameworks, with different basic assumptions, are not possible, but in carrying this out she relies on a controversial empirical claim about perceptual content (p.142) (see, e.g. Clark 2000, Ch. 5), and neglects to consider frameworks, like that of the Pyrrhonian skeptic, which mandate *withholding* from making basic assumptions. I suspect that this kind of framework would not be vulnerable to her criticisms, and so this omission is troubling. Finally, she concedes that some alternative frameworks are possible (namely those belonging to non-human animals), but says that a relativism based on this point would be “quite toothless” (p. 144). It is unclear why she then concludes that her view does not lead to relativism, rather than that it leads to an *unproblematic form* of relativism.

In the closing chapter (pp. 153-180), we see the extended rationality view ‘extended’ to other domains. The result is four more types of, or perhaps aspects of, rationality. *Inductive* rationality is constituted by, and therefore mandates the acceptance of, propositions like “What has happened consistently in the past will happen again in the future”; *diachronic* rationality is constituted by, and mandates, propositions like “There is a past”; *social* rationality is constituted by, and mandates, propositions like “Informers are generally reliable” and “There are informers/other minds”, and finally; basic logical laws like modus tollens constitute, and are mandated by, *deductive* rationality.

I found the overall structure of the book problematic: most of the arguments are crammed into chapters 3 and 4, where they feel somewhat rushed, whereas chapters 1, 2 and 5 make comparatively small points and involve unnecessary repetition. However, this should not put off prospective readers. The book contains many important and persuasive arguments and should be of interest to anyone interested in epistemic justification and related debates.

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