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A Priori Justification, by Albert Casullo. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Pp. xiii + 249. H/b \$55.00.

The avowed aim of this closely argued volume is to 'provide a systematic treatment of the primary epistemological issues associated with the *a priori* that is sensitive to recent developments in the field of epistemology.' Casullo clearly succeeds in this aim and even those who are unsympathetic to such developments as externalism and naturalism will learn much from his penetrating discussion of the issues. Four main claims are defended in the book: (1) the concept of a priori justification is the minimal concept of non-experiential justification; (2) the basic question in the area is whether there are non-experiential sources of justified belief; (3) articulating the concept of a priori justification and establishing that there are sources of such justification require empirical investigation; and (4) the usual preoccupation with necessity and analyticity in discussions of the *a priori* is misplaced. Among the virtues of Casullo's discussion are his precise formulations of numerous arguments, his many genuinely illuminating distinctions, and his insistence that treating a priori and a posteriori justification differently requires argument. In spite of the reservations expressed below, I recommend careful study of Casullo's book to anyone interested in the epistemology of the *a priori*.

The first section of the book is dedicated to the question of the nature of a priori knowledge. Casullo maintains that no analysis of a priori justification which features only non-epistemic conditions (such as necessity or analyticity) can succeed. Even if it is extensionally adequate, such an analysis will fail to identify the salient *epistemic* feature of a priori justification. (It isn't entirely clear what distinguishes epistemic from non-epistemic conditions and so one might wonder if this constraint would, contrary to Casullo's aims, undermine an analysis of justification in terms of production by a reliable process.) Casullo counts source of justification, strength of justification and defeasibility conditions as genuine epistemic conditions. He argues that in order for a strength or defeasibility condition to serve as a condition *distinctive* of a priori justification, such a condition must require a greater degree of justification or indefeasibility of beliefs justified a priori than is required for knowledge in general and so must be defended by plausible argument or rejected as *ad hoc*.

A purely negative source analysis of a priori justification holds that it is 'justification independent of experience'. However, there is a wide sense of 'experience' which includes all occurrent conscious states and a narrow sense which includes only sense experience. The former mistakenly implies that a priori justification is incompatible with conscious phenomenology. The latter wrongly classifies introspective and memory beliefs as a priori. So, many rationalists have appealed to an analysis which seeks to specify a positive source, ϕ , of a priori justification:

(P1) *S*'s belief that *p* is justified a priori if and only if *S*'s belief that *p* is justified by ϕ .

Casullo rejects (P1), claiming (a) that 'one cannot reject the *source* of a priori justification proffered by such an analysis without rejecting the *existence* of a priori justification', and (b) that 'the analysis is uninformative' in providing 'no indication of *why* ϕ is an a priori source'. Instead, he endorses

(P2) *S*'s belief that *p* is justified a priori if and only if *S*'s belief that *p* is justified by *some* non-experiential source.

As some of Casullo's subsequent claims depend upon the choice of (P2) over (P1), it is worth noting that these complaints about (P1) are not compelling. First, it seems quite possible for two proponents of the a priori to coherently disagree about whether the correct analysis of a priori justification appeals to ϕ , just as those who agree that there are (or could be) cases of knowledge may disagree about the correct analysis of knowledge. Second, while it is clear that there is a sense of 'a priori' on which an a priori belief is one justified independent of experience, it is not clear why the proponent of (P1) is obligated to say why ϕ counts as a priori while memory does not as she claims that the negative conception of the a priori is incomplete.

A different account of what it means for a belief to be justified 'independent of experience' (articulated in influential work by Philip Kitcher) supports a competing analysis which adds to (P2) the further condition that the belief in question *cannot be defeated* by experience. Casullo argues that (P2) bests this competitor by allowing 'justified a priori' to mean something similar to what it means in 'justified experientially' or 'justified introspectively' (which do not include any indefeasibility condition), and by allowing for the possibility that even if *S* knows *p* empirically, *S* can know a priori that *p*.

The central section of the book is concerned with the existence of a priori knowledge. Arguments supporting the existence of a priori knowledge are divided into conceptual arguments (which appeal to some alleged sufficient condition of apriority such as unrevisability or empirical indefeasibility), criterial arguments (which claim that propositions of a certain sort which we do know could not be known a posteriori), and deficiency arguments (which argue that a priori knowledge is required in order to avoid unacceptable forms of scepticism). All are carefully discussed and found wanting.

In rejecting the Kantian criterial argument from necessity, a very useful disambiguation of 'a necessary proposition' is presented which distinguishes between the *general modal status of p* (whether *p* is necessary or contingent), the *truth-value of p* (whether *p* is true or false), and the *specific modal status of p* (the conjunction of the former two categories). Kant's argument is said to assume the false doctrine that if the general modal status of *p* is knowable only a priori, then the truth-value of *p* is knowable only a priori. A second criterial 'modal argument' claims merely that one cannot know the general modal status of a necessary proposition on the basis of experience. Casullo suggests that the best support for this argument is the claim that experience can teach us

only what is actually the case and he disputes this claim by suggesting that our knowledge of true counterfactual conditionals entails a posteriori knowledge of the non-actual. This objection seems to me to gain spurious plausibility from the common practice of counting as a posteriori any belief which is justified partly by empirical evidence. This allows Casullo to elide the fact that such a posteriori knowledge might itself require some a priori basis. Hence, the proponent of the modal argument may claim that one cannot know a counterfactual on an *entirely* a posteriori basis and thereby avoid Casullo's criticism.

The main 'deficiency' argument considered is Bonjour's recent argument that one must embrace a priori justification about principles of inference or be driven to scepticism about the majority of our empirical beliefs (*In Defense of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Casullo suggests that the crucial premiss in Bonjour's argument is the claim that no experience can directly justify a belief whose content goes beyond that of the experience. Casullo's criticism focuses exclusively on the allegedly 'metaphorical' nature of Bonjour's account of how we come to have universals as the objects of our thought. However, a failure to satisfactorily explain *how* it is that we come to grasp the truth of principles of inference (if, indeed, such an explanation is possible) does not imply that we do not do so, whereas it is clear that we do not *experience* the correctness of the requisite principles of inference.

Arguments opposing the existence of a priori knowledge are divided into conceptual arguments (which appeal to a necessary condition of a priori justification), radical empiricist accounts of knowledge alleged to be knowable only a priori, and arguments from scientific and philosophical naturalism. Again, all are judged unconvincing. Conceptual arguments are shown to rely on mistaken claims about the necessary conditions of a priori justification. In reply to radical empiricist attempts to accommodate some body of our knowledge by providing an account of how it might be empirically justified, Casullo points out that such accounts fail to show that such knowledge may not *also* be justified a priori.

Contemporary arguments against a priori justification from philosophical or scientific naturalism ('incompatibility arguments') have their source in Benacerraf's 'Mathematical Truth'. Though he develops the central problem in connection with a detailed discussion of process reliabilism, Casullo helpfully notes that the issues are largely independent of that particular epistemological theory, as any plausible epistemological theory must allow for defeaters. Casullo suggests that the serious obstacles to explaining how there could be reliable processes generating beliefs about the causally inert abstract entities often alleged to be the truth makers of a priori beliefs constitutes 'potential defeating evidence' for beliefs generated by such processes. While Casullo does not attempt to determine if the potential defeater is ultimately successful, I would suggest that the fact that claims about the conditions for defeat are based largely upon a priori rational intuitions implies that attempts to wield such conditions against the existence of a priori justification run the risk of

self-defeat.

Perhaps the most striking and controversial part of Casullo's book consists of his claims that both the articulation of the minimal concept of a priori justification enshrined in (P₂) and the most promising way of developing a case for the existence of such justification require empirical investigation. As (P₂) holds that a priori justification is justification by a non-experiential source, full understanding of its implications requires clarification of the nature of a non-experiential source. Allowing that rational intuitions and other states alleged to justify a priori are not within the extension of the narrow sense of 'experience' at issue here, Casullo argues that no extant philosophical analysis of this narrow sense is adequate. He proposes that 'experience' is 'a putative natural kind term whose reference is fixed by local paradigms', which paradigms are 'the cognitive processes associated with the five senses' and which processes are identified in terms of various 'surface features'. It is, allegedly, a matter for empirical science to ascertain whether or not the concept of experience succeeds in picking out a natural kind and to inform us whether other cognitive processes are, in fact, within its extension.

This proposal is, I believe, guilty of unjustified generalization from the Kripke-Putnam examples. Casullo claims that we are 'aware of some characteristic features of experience but not of its underlying nature' and that the 'surface characteristics' used to identify experience are neither necessary nor sufficient for something to count as an experience. While Casullo remains somewhat non-committal about the nature of the 'surface characteristics', this proposal has what seems to me the unacceptable implication that having a phenomenological life exactly like my own is not sufficient for having experience. In addition, if 'visual experience' were taken to be another natural kind term, Casullo's view seems to allow that someone might have visual experience without any of our phenomenological states.

The second main claim of Casullo's positive proposal is that proponents of the a priori are in a position to attempt to offer empirical evidence for the existence of a priori justification, evidence which should be acceptable to empiricists. Pared to its essentials, the strategy envisioned seems to be one in which both parties agree that certain propositions (of, for example, mathematics, logic and confirmation theory) are true, and it is then shown *on empirical grounds* that there are reliable non-experiential processes which actually produce (or sustain) belief in those propositions, and how such processes produce the beliefs in question. In such a case, Casullo holds that the radical empiricist should concede defeat. This seems to me mistaken, at least if our radical empiricist is a traditional internalist who holds that beliefs are not justified merely by being produced by reliable processes.

An internalist will also dispute Casullo's rejection of the traditional case for rationalism based upon armchair reflection (a priori intuition and introspection). Against such a case, Casullo objects that reflection can reveal only what one 'takes to be' the justification for accepting the proposition in question but

not that rational insight 'in fact justifies acceptance of the propositions in question'. This, he claims, is for two reasons. The first is that introspection cannot provide one with reason to think an introspectible state is the 'basis' of one's belief because the basing relation 'involves a counterfactual dependence of the belief on the alleged ground of the belief'. However, it seems to me that when one has a clear rational intuition (in the absence of defeaters), this suffices to justify one's occurrent belief in the content of the intuition. Hence, one can have introspective awareness of the fact that one's occurrent belief is caused or sustained by the intuition in question, or it is possible for a belief to be 'based upon' a rational intuition in the relevant sense even if it is not caused or sustained by the intuition.

Casullo's second objection to this defence of rationalism is that reflection on examples does not provide grounds 'for believing the *general* claim that beliefs based on rational insight are likely to be true'. If this is meant as an objection to the notion that reflection may serve to justify the minimal rationalist doctrine that some propositions may be justifiably believed on the basis of particular rational intuitions, then it presupposes that one cannot justifiably believe that a particular rational intuition justifies belief in its content without a prior justification of a general claim about rational insights generally. Here, I believe that the rationalist ought to disagree and point out that the generalization of this doctrine leads to a regress.

The penultimate chapter discusses the relationship between apriority and necessity. Casullo, deploying the helpful distinctions mentioned earlier, argues that Kripke's examples of the necessary a posteriori show that not all knowledge of the truth-values of necessary propositions is a priori, but leave untouched the thesis that all knowledge of the general modal status of necessary propositions is a priori. The final chapter argues convincingly against the traditional view that synthetic a priori knowledge is objectionably mysterious while a priori knowledge of analytic propositions is unproblematic. Casullo shows that no conception of analyticity justifies this common view as they all ultimately appeal to a source of justification indistinguishable from that commonly alleged by rationalists to justify a priori belief in synthetic propositions or provide no epistemological insight whatsoever.

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