

science, in the broadest sense of the word—is a complex achievement, which depends on a number of different activities: devising theories, testing them experimentally, inventing and making scientific instruments, devising the mathematical and computational techniques which are used to develop theories and interpret experimental data, and inventing the new concepts and understanding the existing concepts in which theoretical ideas are expressed.

In conclusion, art and philosophy are *quite* strange. They are essentially reflective and critical activities, in a way, or to a degree, that the rest of science is not. But I do not believe that neither art or philosophy is quite as strange as Nöe thinks they are, or quite as similar.

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Judgment and Agency, by Ernest Sosa. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 288.

The aim of Ernest Sosa's latest book, which he states in its first paragraph, is to develop his virtue epistemology 'further than before, by taking up issues of metaphysics and ethics (broadly construed) that arise for it'. Part of this development involves clearing up misunderstandings and part of it involves showing how his view can usefully be applied to a wide range of philosophical topics and puzzles. Given Sosa's broad aim, his book covers a lot of ground. The discussions of particular issues will appeal to those interested in those particular topics, and the chapters, on the whole, are self-contained, some being reprints of earlier articles. But, throughout, one finds interconnected and re-emerging themes that are of central importance to all those interested in the nature of belief and knowledge, the nature and extent of epistemic agency, and philosophical methodology. Having Sosa's carefully and forcefully argued views on these topics is most welcome. My discussion will revolve around four of the book's central themes. The first has to do with the importance of carefully making distinctions among related phenomena; it is often the best way to address vexing philosophical problems. Second, that one can and ought to strictly delineate the domain of the epistemic. Third, that what looks like a very demanding conception of knowledge is important, relevant, and indeed central to epistemology, and finally, that Sosa's virtue epistemology has the resources to account for those aspects of our epistemic life that seem to be connected to agency and for which we, as agents, can be held responsible.

That the book is titled 'Judgment and Agency' serves as a clue to the importance of both of these concepts, though one can lose sight of their centrality when led to questions of how Sosa's virtue epistemology can

better address traditional philosophical problems concerning lotteries and fake barns. When laying out the summary of chapters in the introduction, Sosa devotes the most space to Chapter 2, 'Virtue Epistemology: Character vs. Competence'. Here is where he considers a challenge to his 'reliabilist' form of virtue epistemology from those who view his theory as quite distinct from what are called 'responsibilist' versions of virtue epistemology, ones which highlight agential virtues, or character traits. It has seemed to many that Sosa's view does not allow a place for such virtues and that a 'virtuous' belief on his account is just one produced by a reliable enough process. Virtuous believers would then be much like virtuous toasters; if a toaster is working reliably enough to succeed in its aim of making toast, it is virtuous; similarly, if a person reliably forms true beliefs then that person is a virtuous believer. Sosa rejects this characterization and tells us that 'reliabilist, competence-based virtue epistemology must be understood broadly, in a more broadly ecumenical way, with responsibilist, agential intellectual virtue at its core' (pp. 3, 36).

To begin to understand how this is so, we can see why this toaster analogy may well apply to a kind of reliabilism, but does not seem to apply to Sosa's *virtue* reliabilism, which has always been concerned with performance normativity. Sosa sees epistemic performances as constituting a species of a larger genus, and thinks that all performances can be evaluated according to how *apt* they are. Sosa opens up the book with a brief reminder that a performance can do well in one or more of three distinct ways: by attaining its aim, by being an exercise of pertinent competence, and finally by being *apt*, which means it reaches its aim through the competence exercised (p. 1). And performances, at minimum, require some agent to perform them. The toaster toasting bread is not a performance. So once we are reminded that knowledge is a successful performance and one in which the believer manifests competence in successfully reaching the aim of belief, namely truth, we should see that the view is not strictly mechanistic in the ways some other reliabilist theories are. Sosa tells us (and offers quotations from his earlier texts to reinforce the point) that mechanisms, as he thinks of them, can cover both simple reflexes as well as higher order complex pondering, and in a footnote says 'dictionaries reveal that a "mechanism" need not reside in a machine. A google search will turn up "trading mechanisms," "defense mechanisms," "mechanisms for dealing with stress," etc.' (p. 37).

If your toaster reliably gives you toast, you will not care *how* it manages to do so. The idea of an object or non-agent *manifesting competence* makes no sense. It is very important to Sosa that one only attains knowledge if the true belief is arrived at 'in the right way'. Throughout the book, Sosa attempts to become clearer and more explicit about what this amounts to. The first chapter, 'The Unity of Action, Perception and Knowledge', argues that one can find this same type of problem about how to offer content to the idea of 'in the right way' emerging for theories of action and perception. What is

'the right way' for an intention to be related to the intended act for it to count as a case of acting intentionally? What is 'the right way' for a subject to relate to an object to count as *perceiving* the object? For Sosa, the idea of *manifestation* of competence is key. While he tells us 'What counts as manifestation seems also graspable only in implicit ways, as with etiquette, and not through explicit (and nontrivial) verbal formulation' (p. 26), he does try to provide a deeper understanding by means of analogies and examples. Competences, for Sosa, are types of dispositions. If one is a competent driver, for example, one has a certain skill such that in a range of states and situations one will be successful in driving. Of course, one can only manifest this disposition when driving, and one may succeed in driving without manifesting competence (say if one is intoxicated or tired and could have easily failed). And, ultimately, for an agent to manifest competence in an epistemic performance, it will not be enough for one to possess the disposition to form true beliefs; this disposition will have to account appropriately for the outcome and, at times, this will only be possible if the agent possesses 'responsibilist, agential intellectual virtue'.

Yet it has seemed to some that the whole idea of what Sosa has called 'faulty competence', for example, having a competent memory or a competent faculty of perception, is very different from possessing agential virtues such as open mindedness or intellectual courage and that perhaps the competence of such faculties can be manifest in forming true beliefs without an *agent's* competence, understood as the manifestation of certain intellectual virtues. Sosa insists that, while some knowledge can result from mere faculty competence, he never meant to restrict his view to such knowledge. The mistaken impression, according to Sosa, stems from the nature of many of his examples which involve the competences of simple perception, introspective, or mnemonic knowledge. Sosa says that he would focus on examples 'simple enough to reveal more starkly certain basic problems that any theory of knowledge must solve' (p. 38). And so many of these examples are of what he has called 'animal knowledge' which is simply apt belief, and are meant to distinguish such knowledge (or apt belief) from luckily getting the truth, which is one of those basic problems. When explaining this difference, Sosa often uses the analogy of an archer hitting a target. One's shot is apt if and only if its accuracy manifests its competence. But if we are assessing the performance of a hunter shooting, this evaluation goes beyond whether her shot is apt. Since shot selection is integral to the competence of a good hunter, a hunter 'needs the second-order competence to assess her first order competence and its required conditions', and so even if a hunter's shot is apt '[i]t is reflectively competent if and only if it corresponds to a competent second-order awareness that the shot would be apt' (p. 68). In the realm of epistemic performance, the difference would be between having an apt belief, and forming a reflective judgment about whether one is in a position to aptly believe. For this second order judgment to be apt, one must

engage in higher order reflection that manifests competence of intellectual and agential virtues.

Further, Sosa argues that these higher order beliefs, which he calls judgments that result in *judgmental* beliefs about, for example, when to close inquiry or when to endorse lower level credences that arise almost automatically from faculties of memory or perception, are under our volitional control. Thus, he shares what he takes to be Descartes' view that there is a 'distinction between two attitudes that might be called "belief." One is an implicit confidence that suffices to guide our action...The other is an act of judgment made freely and voluntarily, or a disposition to so judge upon considering the relevant question' (p. 238). This distinction between judgmental beliefs and merely 'functional' beliefs which are credences, or degrees of confidence, is one Sosa invokes in many different discussions. He thinks it helps in making sense of what Descartes is up to in the *Meditations*. In particular, he thinks that when Descartes doubts all his 'beliefs' he need not give up the lower level action guiding confidence, but that these can 'do their guiding even if one forbears endorsing them...One can sustain a highly confident credence that p, despite suspending any conscious endorsement of that attitude, and withholding any correlated conscious judgment that p' (p. 239).

Sosa argues that making this distinction between kinds of beliefs can help explain many of our intuitions in the vast Gettier-related examples. For Sosa 'Judgment is affirmation with the intention to *thereby* affirm competently (period) and indeed aptly...Judgment thus involves a second-order stance regarding one's own affirming. When one judges, one affirms with the aim to get it right aptly by affirming' (p. 82, emphasis in original). One can also decide that either positive or negative affirmation is too risky and so suspend judgment and thus 'an aim that might be shared by epistemic affirmation and suspension is the aim *to affirm aptly and only aptly*' (p. 82, emphasis in original) and a judgmental belief again is 'the disposition to judgment upon consideration, when endeavoring to affirm aptly'.

With this in mind, we can now ask why Barney, in fake barn country, fails to know even when he aptly believes there is a real barn in front of him. This is a case where Barney sees a real barn in front of him and believes accordingly, but this is one of the few real barns in a countryside filled with barn façades. Barney falls short of knowledge because, given the danger posed by nearby possibilities, there is some sense in which he has performed unsafely; he could too easily have affirmed incorrectly. Sosa argues that if one wants an account of safety that will explain why Barney falls short, as well as why subjects like Norman the clairvoyant who 'finds [*sic*] themselves believing something, quite reliably in fact, but with no idea how they are doing so, nor even *that* they are doing so' (p. 78, emphasis in original) also falls short, one must locate the unsafety at the level of second order awareness. Barney's *judgment* is apt 'only if he is guided to the aptness of his affirmation (that he does face a barn) by his second-order awareness that if he then affirmed

(that he faced a barn) he *would* (likely enough) be right' (p. 79, emphasis in original). If one judges aptly then one's affirmation is safe, but we can see that, for Barney, this is not the case. And so 'Barney and his like fail to judge aptly, and *thus* fail to know (fail to know full well)...[In] order to know full well, Barney must know that if in his conditions he affirmed that he faces a barn, not easily would he be wrong' (p. 79, emphasis in original).

Still, Barney and his like may know *in some sense*. According to Sosa, when it comes to cases of the type involving Norman the clairvoyant there is a close to even split among epistemologists about whether such subjects know. He introduces a case of this type taken from ordinary life by asking us to consider what goes on when we take an eye exam. As I get to the bottom rows, I start to lose confidence that I am getting it right and am in effect 'guessing' whether, say, it is an 'E' or an 'F'. 'Suppose however it turns out, that (unbeknownst to me) I am in fact getting it right year after year at a line where I am thus unsure' (p. 74). In such a case I am affirming and doing so in the endeavour to get it right and I am manifesting competence in doing so. How then do we assess my performance? Sosa says 'We are here conflicted. *Somehow* I *do* know what letters I see, as shown by my impressive reliability. But there is also a pull to say I do not *really* know' (p. 75, emphasis in original). Sosa explains this by saying while we may know at some very basic level, at the point where we start guessing, we are no longer even aiming for aptness of the affirmation; we are just aiming to do what the test requires. We are still aiming at truth, trying to get it right, but aiming to affirm correctly and aiming to affirm aptly differ. The latter requires reflective competence and apt judgment.

Those familiar with Sosa's epistemology will be accustomed to the idea that there are levels of knowledge, corresponding to iterated aptness. We have seen the difference between animal and reflective knowledge, but we see now that the idea of *full aptness*, where one's reflective knowledge guides one's judgments, relates to an even higher level. One can aptly affirm that p, but one can also aptly affirm the aptness of one's affirmation that p. This is, as we have seen, what Sosa calls knowing full well. In his book of that title this even higher level was introduced, but it wasn't entirely clear whether the difference between a judgment being sufficiently apt to count as reflective knowledge and it being *fully apt*, which it can be only if 'it is guided to aptness through the agent's reflectively apt risk assessment' (p. 69) was an important difference for epistemology.

Now that Sosa is focusing attention on reflective knowledge, he attempts to show that this kind of knowledge is actually crucial in trying to explain the many intuitions about knowledge possession that have been at the centre of traditional epistemology. He says 'The more important concept, it now seems clear, is that of knowing full well' (p. 74). It is important for Sosa that questions about epistemic agency are not taken as orthogonal to the traditional problems of the nature and value of knowledge. It is by recognizing that some

knowledge is only attainable if one *chooses* to endorse what seems true while endorsing also that this choice is apt that one can see why in certain cases people fall short even when it seems they have manifested competence to some degree and end up with true beliefs because of this competence.

Many recent discussions of epistemic or doxastic agency argue that the epistemic and ethical realms are not as distinct as traditional epistemology has assumed. As we have seen, those who have been critical of competence-based, reliabilist virtue epistemology think that it is important to recognize that certain moral virtues have a role to play in virtuous believing. Further, once one accepts that there is a volitional component in what we believe, it seems the norms of evaluation will be much more continuous with those which govern action. But it is important for Sosa that this unity not be overstated and that epistemic performances remain distinct from performances of other kinds. It is significant that he tells us he is concerned with discussing issues of ethics 'broadly construed' that arise for his theory, since he thinks that certain kinds of ethical issues are inappropriately applied in the context of epistemology. If I evaluate you as being callous or aggressive in not allowing your 10 year old to take back a chess move, I am not thereby assessing anything about you *qua* chess player. Sosa argues that epistemic performances can be insulated in a similar way your performance in chess.

So Sosa wants to make room for 'responsibilist, agential intellectual virtue' as being essential for the highest degree of epistemic competence, but also wants to exclude moral or ethical virtues from the epistemic domain. To make this distinction he says 'we should distinguish between an intellectual ethics that is purely epistemic, and an intellectual ethics that is properly a part of ethics' (p. 43). While some ethical virtues and competences such as open mindedness and intellectual courage can be applied in the epistemic domain '[t]he study of such ethical intellectual competences and virtues would be part of applied ethics...Business ethics is a branch of ethics that studies ethical issues concerning the practice of business in particular. A correlate intellectual ethics is thus a branch of ethics that studies ethical issues concerning scientific or other research, and concerning the value of various sorts of knowledge for human flourishing, and concerning issues of 'the acquisition and retention and sharing of such knowledge. Et cetera' (p. 44). To determine what counts as a purely epistemic virtue we need to take the question as given and focus on how best to settle the question, by affirmation, denial or suspension. The kinds of virtues that are relevant here are ones which will render such a choice apt. In making this choice 'one should exercise proper *care* and *attentiveness*' and these can be 'stable character traits of an epistemic agent' (pp. 44-5, emphasis in original). Sosa also mentions some virtues of inquiry such as those relevant to 'putting one in a position to know' and 'intellectual perseverance' that, while not knowledge-constituting competences, are all '*purely intellectual* virtues' that are 'integral to a *purely epistemic* intellectual ethics' (p. 45, emphasis in original).

Nevertheless, given that the focus of this book is on reflective, conscious judgmental beliefs, Sosa says his main interest is on these *acts*: 'Our emphasis is on humans as social animals who reason, often consciously, who do so individually and collectively, both practically and theoretically. So we focus on the practical and theoretical acts by means of which humans accomplish all of that...[If] our interest is rational actions or beliefs that are outcomes of reasoning...then acts are where the action is' (pp. 67-8). Focusing on acts, but acts to which ethical evaluation does not apply, requires making sense of *purely* epistemic or intellectual acts. Sosa says more about such epistemic purity when considering the issue of pragmatic encroachment and what counts as a competence being 'reliable enough' to guide our judgments. He asks 'If we put aside pragmatic concerns such as whether the check will bounce, or whether we will be late for a meeting in another city, what then determines whether a competence is epistemically reliable *enough*?' (p. 172). If we are concerned only with the 'purely epistemic', the only relevant competence is the disposition 'to discern the true from the false in a particular domain' (p. 172, emphasis in original). How reliable is 'reliable enough' to count as competent? This is a difficult question, and Sosa devotes some time to addressing it, but it is important for him that, when addressing it, we restrict ourselves to the 'domain-internal standards' of epistemic success, just as we appeal to domain-internal standards in tennis or hunting to determine competence in those domains: 'Whether a particular performance is appropriate within either domain depends on how appropriately that performance is meant to contribute – and how appropriately it does contribute – to a pattern of activities with enough probability of attaining domain-internal success, such as that of the hunt or that of the match' (p. 173).

I will close my discussion with some questions and concerns. We have seen that Sosa thinks we can solve or dissolve many philosophical problems by distinguishing between certain kinds of belief and certain levels of knowledge. I worry that it can be difficult, when we are concerned with a creature with the capacity for higher order reflection, to usefully maintain the distinction between these two kinds of 'belief'. When Sosa is defending his view against an overly mechanistic interpretation, and insisting that 'responsibilist competences' have always been present, he quotes a passage from the earliest presentation of his virtue reliabilism: 'The beliefs of a *rational* animal hence would seem never to issue from *unaided* introspection, memory, or perception. For reason is always at least a silent partner on the watch for relevant data, a silent partner whose very *silence* is a contributing cause of the belief outcome' (p. 37, emphasis in original). What this picture suggests is that all our beliefs, even the so-called merely 'functional ones', are being tacitly endorsed, and thus seem to be products of our agency just as our more consciously expressed judgments are. One may well think that what transforms a mere 'seeming' into a 'belief' is that it can be rationally evaluated and the person concerned can be held responsible for maintaining it.

But, throughout much of his discussion, Sosa argues that it is only at the higher, reflective conscious state that we locate volition and responsibility.

Consider again Sosa's interpretation of Descartes. Sosa says that to put beliefs in doubt, on this view, 'is *not* to disable them from functioning in the guidance of action, nor even in the reasoning required for inquiry. Compatibly with a belief's retention of its animal/*cognito* status and its ability to provide the guidance expected of such beliefs, the believer might refuse to endorse his belief when it is brought to consciousness for rational inspection' (p. 239, emphasis in original). The main difference, for Sosa, between Descartes and the Pyrrhonists, is that the Pyrrhonists never so endorse while, for Descartes, some beliefs can be rationally endorsed. But how can one retain a belief and not endorse it? Usually, once one recognizes that a belief is not worthy of endorsement, one thereby loses the belief. And those beliefs that are resilient, such as prejudices learned in childhood that one does not endorse but cannot quite shake, are problematic. Also, given the role of reason as the 'silent partner', it is hard to see how any seeming or credence that rises to the level of belief is not endorsed.

The idea of 'epistemic purity' which seeks to carve out an autonomous epistemic domain along the lines of tennis or hunting is problematic. The first thing to note is that Sosa's cited 'historical antecedents', namely Sextus and Descartes, did not think of epistemology along such lines. For Descartes, errors in belief and in action are both failures of the will; they are both moral errors. Sosa himself points to an important difference between the epistemic domain and others in Chapter 8, 'Social Roots of Human Knowledge'. After emphasizing the need to carve out a pure epistemic domain, he says that trying to define 'the epistemically successful life' is not as simple as defining success in tennis or hunting, and this is partly because '[as] humans and as fellow members of our communities and of our species, we depend crucially and variously on the acquisition and sharing of information' (p. 173). And he says that in thinking about what counts as being epistemically competent we need to factor in these collective and practical concerns: 'Here non-epistemic factors do plausibly bear' (p. 173). But once it is recognized that epistemic performances and their success cannot be isolated from the wider needs and concerns of the community, the idea of their purity is put into question and we can see that they are importantly different from performances in tennis or hunting.

There is much more in this book than I have been able to discuss here. Sosa devotes quite a lot of space to explaining what he takes to be the relevant safety condition on knowledge, distinguishing it from sensitivity conditions and other safety conditions (Chapters 4 and 5), and says much more about the nature of competence (Chapters 4, 8, and 9). His discussion about the various kinds of philosophical explorations and the importance of recognizing them is extremely illuminating (Chapter 1). I have said next to nothing about his view of intentional action (Chapter 7) or his take on how to

interpret Sextus and the possibility of living without beliefs (Chapter 10). Those interested in deepening their understanding of these topics and Sosa's view on them will benefit a great deal from these discussions.

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