New Books

The Ethics of Identity
By Kwame Anthony Appiah
Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 358.

This book promises us a new vision of liberal humanism, but it comes in a remarkably familiar shape, namely the shape given by Mill in his essay *On Liberty*. And indeed Appiah points to Mill as his guide. Within this picture the most salient feature of human beings is their capacity for autonomy. This involves them being able to direct their own lives, make life plans of their own choosing. Any interference with such autonomy is only justifiable to prevent harm to others. The lives which such individuals lead can be ethically evaluated in relation to the projects which they have set themselves. Their choices are constrained by the universal demands of morality, but such demands are not determining, and leave room for a great diversity of projects. The value of such diversity is not intrinsic but dependent on the greater chance of leading to the good and the true which diversity offers.

Appiah introduces into this picture concerns about identities. Our existence as men or women, gay or straight, English or Somali, might seem to restrict the autonomy of our life plans. Appiah, however, has two responses to such worries. The first is the Sartrean one that such features are simply the context from which we shape our choices. They 'are not constraints on that shaping; they are its materials' (163). The second move, which is also Sartrean in feel, is that our identities are not simply facts about us, given with our biology or place of birth. Rather our identities are relations of *living as*. We make our lives *as* a butler, or a woman, a fish eater or lover of opera.

In making our lives in these ways we utilise 'what we might call scripts; narratives that people can use in shaping their projects and in telling their life stories' (22). These scripts are primarily socially provided. Appiah provides the following conditions for an identity claim. 'First it requires the availability of terms in a public discourse that are used to pick out bearers of the identity ... there must be *a social conception* of Ls ... A second element of a social identity is the internalization of those labels ... *identification as an L*. ... The final element ... is the existence of patterns of behaviour

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towards Ls such that Ls are sometimes *treated as Ls*', (67–68). Our identities, then, are social kinds not natural ones, though they may be hung on facts about as such as our desires, the colour of our skins or the shape of our bodies. Here we find echoes of Sartre's claim that 'I cannot be crippled without choosing myself as crippled.' But Appiah denies the account is purely a voluntarist one. Such identifications occur often in the formation of ourselves as subjects. Moreover the scripts, though multiple, are socially given. Nonetheless the identifications are open to reflective scrutiny, as a consequence of which we seem to be able to reject a certain identity or challenge the content of a script which is commonly associated with it. 'We make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society' (107). What is clear is that we, in forming our life plans, decide which identifications are to be important to us. We may be assigned a nationality, for example, in virtue of our place of birth or residence, but nonetheless *living as* an American or Kosovan may play no central role in our life.

Are there any constraints on the identifications we can make? Appiah does remark that they must make sense, but this point is not developed. What is also unclear is whether the demand of 'making sense' provides any basis of critique for what we might choose as such central identifications. Is living as a lover of opera as coherent as living as a gay man, or a socialist? Can we critique a nationalist identity on the basis that there is no coherent concept of a nation? The question of whether we can critique identities for lack of coherence leads to the question of whether we can critique them for their ethical or moral content. For Appiah our identities are a source of values and motivation. They seem to both causally produce and provide justifications for the direction which we give our lives. They give us our projects. They also provide the criteria in relation to which our lives are evaluated as being successful or not. These justifications, however, are internal to the identities themselves. What about moral or ethical critique from outside? Appiah adopts a distinction between morality and ethics. Moral concerns are universalisable and primarily concern our relationship with others. Ethical concerns derive from the specificity of our situations and identifications and the courses of action which they require. It seems that we can critique identities from the moral perspective but not clearly from an ethical one.

In this division between the ethical and the moral, where does the commitment to liberal humanism fall? He does not spell this out but it must be, for him, within the sphere of the moral; for the

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state is allowed to oppose the workings of a chosen identity, if it fails to promote the autonomy of members of the group. The identities which people espouse have no external value in themselves and the state has no role in ensuring that any particular set of them are available. The state, in respecting autonomy, however, is required, once the requirements or morality have been settled, to respect identities in so far as they are constitutive of individuals, who are themselves intrinsically valuable. In this context Appiah criticises those authors who see the preservation of certain cultures as being of intrinsic value. One basis of the criticism is that value can only attach to individuals. A second is that the attempt to protect cultures is frequently in conflict with the autonomy of members within them. In this context, he remarks 'if autonomy is the sponsoring concern, the diversity principle—the value of diversity simpliciter—cannot command our loyalty.' Instead he embraces 'Millian diversity—diversity in the service of individual well-being' (153).

In the face of the variety of identities, which we find that people possess, Appiah offers us the strategy of *rooted cosmopolitanism*. In line with this we recognise that people have different obligations deriving from their different identifications. This also leads to them having different values. Nonetheless we attempt to engage across such differences in a dialogue about possible ways to live our lives. Such dialogue is made possible by our shared humanity, a central feature of which is to tell ourselves stories about our lives, stories in which others can imaginatively participate. Such dialogue is justified as enabling us to better evaluate what constitutes an ethical life. Insistence on such shared humanity, a sharedness that yields more similarities than differences, also underpins his claim that 'our moral modernity consists chiefly of extending the principle of equal respect to those who had previously been outside the compass of sympathy; in that sense, it has consisted in the ability to see similarity where our predecessors saw only difference' (145–6).

Such a picture makes it difficult to theorise both conflict and the operations of power. Indeed in relation to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, he points out only the similarities both sides share in seeing Jerusalem as a holy city. The difficulty comes partly from his view that conflict does not derive primarily from differences in identity. Where it does, then his engaged dialogue seems the only solution. What this disguises is the way in which identities are implicated in the workings of power differences both within and across societies. The norms attaching to different identities do not yield simply a variety of ways in which we might choose to make a

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life. They create classifications which enable the exercise of power. (Think here of the identities of the colonialist and those which are simultaneously formed for the natives they are to colonise; current constructions of Islamic identities justifying interventions in other jurisdictions and curtailment of civil liberties; those of men and women; as well as the operations of class).

The distinction which Appiah makes between the moral and the ethical also seems difficult to sustain. It gives him the advantage of apparently respecting difference without the authority of his liberal individualism being called into question. But the picture he presents of the individual choosing their live plans and their life being evaluated by reference to how well they have achieved them, seems one that only makes sense within a specific material and social setting. 'Your individuality, defines your ambitions, determines what achievements have significance in your own particular life ... in my novelist's life ... the fact that I have *not* written that witty ... satire ... is a significant failure ... In your philosopher's life, the witty and intelligent satire you *have* written adds little to your life's value', (163). But the possibility of conceiving of one's life as a project, in this way, requires both a level of material well-being and a conceptual apparatus which are far from universally shared even within the developed world. (It is, in addition, problematic, in any event, to see life as a project which can be evaluated as a success or failure; rather than seeing life as containing projects which can be so evaluated). Moreover this picture cannot make sense of is a life which is not conceived of in terms of projects for the self, but experienced as a set of responses to needs and values encountered. Of course Appiah recognises that we may lead an altruistic life. That would be a consequence of our deciding that we wanted to live as an altruistic person. But such self-regarding identifications may not be involved at all. The failure to recognise such a possibility is a failure to recognise the kind of challenge that difference can present, a challenge to liberal individualism itself.

Kathleen Lennon

Truthmakers: The Contemporary Debate
Edited by Helen Beebee and Julian Dodd
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, pp. 186, £40.

If the rose had not been red, it would not have been true that the rose is red. Truth is *grounded*: the world, in some way, determines

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which propositions are true. Some philosophers have gone further and advanced the 'truthmaker principle': each true proposition is made true by something, an *entity*—the proposition's 'truthmaker'. The papers in this collection—all but two of which were originally presented at a conference in Manchester in 2002—discuss various aspects of this idea.

Gonzalo Rodriguez–Pereyra begins the collection with a defence of the truthmaker principle. The idea that truths require truthmakers, he says, is not captured by the claim that *truth supervenes on being*. Truth supervenes on being, and *vice versa*. But the notion of grounding is asymmetric: even if entity *e* makes true <p> (the proposition that p), the truth of <p> does not ensure that *e* exists.

He frames the truthmaker principle as follows: necessarily, if <p> is true, there is some entity *e* in virtue of which it is true. 'In virtue of' is taken to be a primitive notion, but one connected with other notions. If <p> is true in virtue of *e*, then <*e* exists> *entails* <p>, and *e necessitates* the truth of <p>, inasmuch as there is no possible world containing *e* where <p> is not true (18). Rodriguez–Pereyra restricts the scope of the truthmaker principle to a 'significant' class of synthetic truths, including inessential predications (18). Against Armstrong, he denies that analytic truths have truthmakers. And though he takes negative truths to fall within the scope of the principle (31), he does not discuss here what their truthmakers might be. His concern is with the following question: Does <p> need a truthmaker in order for the truth of <p> to be 'determined by' X, or <p> to be true 'in virtue of' or 'because' X—in other words, in order for the truth of <p> to be *grounded*?

He argues that it does. His opponent is someone who takes truth to be grounded by *how* things are, rather than *whether* things are (23). What grounds the truth that the rose is red? Such a philosopher can answer 'the rose having the property of redness'—but will take themselves to be simply stating *how* the rose is, not referring to some *entity*—such as a state of affairs, or a trope—existing over and above the rose and necessitating the truth of 'the rose is red'.

Rodriguez–Pereyra presents two arguments against this idea. The first is that if we can identify, count and quantify over ways things are, such as *a*'s being F, then these ways exist—and thus answering 'the rose having the property of redness' *is* to pick out some entity that necessitates the truth of 'the rose is red'. As

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Jennifer Hornsby argues in her paper, however, it is by no means clear that our ability to count ways things are forces us to reify them.

Rodriguez–Pereyra's second argument is that if (1) truth is grounded, (2) grounding is a relation, and (3) relations link entities, then it follows that truth is grounded by entities. And each of (1)–(3), he claims, is extremely plausible.

Both Hornsby and Joseph Melia take issue with the premise (2). Hornsby argues that the asymmetry in our thinking about truth can be explained by the fact that how things are said or thought to be (and so truly said or thought to be) depends on how they are, but clearly not *vice versa*; and we can call this dependence between the true proposition and how things are the *grounding* of the first by the second without requiring a *relation* of grounding (42–45). Melia also denies there is such a relation. He argues for what he calls 'sensible nominalism', according to which there are no universals, only individuals that can be described in various ways. Ways are not given many metaphysical analysis (such as *a* is F iff *a* is part of the set of F things); it may be a matter of brute fact that something is a certain way (e.g. that *a* is charged, or has mass). Melia argues that the sensible nomalist 'can have truthmaking without truthmakers' (79) by construing 'makes true' as a non-truth functional connective, rather than a relation between entities: he or she can then claim that *a* is red and *b* is red makes true (S) 'there is a colour that *a* and *b* have in common' and be ontologically committed only to *a* (a red thing) and *b* (another red thing) and the sentence (S), not the property that (S) quantifies over (80). Using this idea Melia shows how ontological commitment to properties (and possible worlds) can be avoided in those sentences where it is difficult to paraphrase such commitment away.

Still, even if groundedness hasn't been shown to require truthmakers, the fact that there are other accounts of groundedness doesn't show that the truthmaker principle is false. Chris Daly argues, however, that the principle is not even well motivated, since it cannot do the explanatory work it has been taken to. It can't, for instance, be used to argue for the truth of realism, since it is compatible with both idealism and pragmatism (96).

Daly also argues—contra Rodriguez–Pereyra—that truthmakers cannot help solve the Problem of Universals. They cannot be used to explain why it is true that *distinct particulars can have the same properties*, since this truth is entailed by (and so made true by) the facts that *some particulars have the same properties* and that *those particulars are distinct* jointly—and these facts constitute no

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explanation (101). But perhaps the truthmaker theorist can meet this objection by claiming that we do explain the truth of a proposition if we *describe* its truthmaker in a suitable way. Let us assume that the facts above are entities, and so the sort of things that can be joint truthmakers for the aforementioned truth. Intuitively, an explanation of how properties can be shared by different particulars requires an understanding of just what properties *are* that they can do this. Daly's description of these truthmaking facts, however, makes no mention of this ontological nature. It is at least arguable that if we describe the facts in such a way as to bring in (for example) *universals* as well as particulars, and make clear how these are instantiated, we have an explanation of why it is true that *distinct particulars can have the same properties*. Daly thinks Rodriguez-Pereyra, since he takes conceptual analysis to be irrelevant to solving the Problems of Universals (101), will be reluctant to respond in this way. But saying that analysing the meaning of 'same property' will not solve the problem, since that only tells us about the contents of our concepts, is not to say that it is unimportant which concepts are used to specify truthmakers when providing explanations.

Perhaps the truthmaker principle would be undermined if it were found that the most fully worked-out truthmaker theory had internal problems. In his paper, Marian David argues that there are tensions within the account advanced in David Armstrong's work. Armstrong takes truthmaking to be an internal relation—by which he means that if *e* is a truthmaker for <p>, it is impossible for *e* and <p> to exist and *e* not make true <p> (if it were possible, the relation would be external) (144). But internal relations supervene on their terms, and Armstrong subscribes to the Ontological Free Lunch: whatever supervenes is no addition of being. David claims that comments by Armstrong suggest he isn't denying the existence of supervenient entities, but how—he wonders—can what supervenes be free otherwise? The truthmaking relation supervenes asymmetrically on its relata, so counts for Armstrong as no addition of being. But if it is an internal relation, hence a relation, doesn't that mean that for Armstrong it is a universal, hence an entity? (150). David explores the idea that supervenient properties and relations are concepts, rather than universals, and the free lunch is the claim that supervenient concepts have no corresponding universals. But he cannot see how a concept could supervene on anything apart from another concept. How, for example, can the existence of the proposition that the rose is red and the rose being

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red ensure the existence of our concept of the truthmaking relation that is being imagined to supervene upon them?

There are other problems. First, Armstrong thinks that internal relations are grounded by the 'identity or difference' of their terms. But if *a* being F makes true <*a* is F>, it is hard to see how *a* being F and <*a* is F> ground the truthmaking relation between them. It can't be due to a shared structure: many propositions have the same structure. And Armstrong does not take the proposition and the state of affairs to be identical.

Second, Armstrong says that propositions should not be taken with 'metaphysical seriousness'. David takes this to mean that talk about propositions is nothing more than a way of typing token beliefs and thoughts (156). But this threatens to make the truthmaking relation external, since particular brains states (the token beliefs for the naturalist) don't have their content essentially. If Armstrong finds this 'too tough to swallow', David concludes, Armstrong will have to get over his 'naturalistic unhappiness with the realm of propositions' (159).

Again, though, I think the truthmaker theorist can overcome these difficulties. First, Armstrong can deny that there are supervenient entities and claim (as Heil puts it in his *From An Ontological Point of View*) that there are levels of description, but not levels of being. If X supervenes on entity *e*, then we take this to mean only that there is a truth involving the term 'X' which is made true by *e*. Second, Armstrong needs to allow that *a* can bear an internal relation to *b* even if one of *a* or *b* does not exist. True, most philosophers think it obvious that for a relation to hold, its relata must exist. But cannot we say that an internal relation R holds when there is a *truth* of the form '*a* bears the internal relation R to *b*'? Such a truth might be grounded by two entities, *a* and *b*. But it might conceivably be grounded by just one of these. We might say that '*e* makes true <p>' is made true by *e*, not *e* and <p>, and so both <p> and *makes true* supervene on *e*, and *makes true* is an internal relation, despite neither <p> nor *makes true* being entities. Since there is only one entity, the truthmaking relation counts as an exception to the claim that instances of an internal relation are grounded by the sameness or difference of their relata. And since *e* itself makes true <p>, why should its being true that *e* makes true <p> require something in addition to *e*—a proposition, or token brain states? It is not clear that we must see propositions as entities of some sort.

There are a number of other contributors. Michael Morris argues that the truthmaker principle can only be motivated by

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idealism, not realism, since idealism is the only way to make sense of the shared structure of states of affairs/tropes and sentences. David Liggins, following remarks by McFetridge, suggests that the question 'what makes true <p>?' is answered by giving the *explanation* of why <p> is true—one benefit being that it avoids every entity making true a necessary truth; 'God exists', for example, if it is a necessary truth, is not explained by the existence of just anything. Fraser MacBride examines David Lewis's changing views on the truthmaker principle, and his attempt to accommodate truthmakers within an ontology of particulars and possible worlds, and a commitment to there being no necessary connections between distinct existences. And Josh Parsons, while trying to find truthmakers for truths concerning the past and future, argues that the relation between truthmakers and their truths is contingent. He defines truthmaking thus: for *x* to make true <p> is for an *x* to be intrinsically such that p (to be such that p independently of the intrinsic nature of its surroundings). My dirty shoes are truthmakers, on this account, for the proposition that my fingernails are dirty. But the fingernails do not necessitate the truth of this proposition, since they might have been clean.

This is an excellent collection. Despite the difficulty of the topic, all papers are clear and well-written, and there is an extremely useful introduction from the editors. It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about which account of the grounding of truth is to be preferred, but one is left in no doubt about the range of possible positions. Anyone interested in contemporary metaphysics should find it an enlightening—and fascinating—read.

Simon Bostock

Beyond "Justification": Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation
By W.P. Alston
Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. xiii + 246.

'It might reasonably be expected in questions which have been canvassed and disputed with great eagerness, since the first origin of science and philosophy, that the meaning of all the terms, at least, should have been agreed upon among the disputants; and our enquiries, in the course of two thousand years, been able to pass from words to the true and real subject of the controversy ... But if we consider the matter more narrowly, we shall be apt to draw a quite opposite conclusion. From this circumstance alone, that a

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controversy has been long kept on foot, and remains still undecided, we may presume that there is some ambiguity in the expression, and that the disputants affix different ideas to the terms employed in the controversy.' Thus, famously, David Hume on liberty and necessity in the first *Enquiry*, but William Alston might have appropriated just these words to describe his attitude, as displayed in *Beyond "Justification"* at least, to the traditional focus of concern amongst epistemologists, the nature of epistemic justification.

Whilst Alston describes this book in his preface as 'a culmination of more than thirty years of active publishing and teaching in epistemology, and, in a larger sense, of more than fifty years of off-and-on concern with epistemological issues' (xi), nevertheless, *Beyond "Justification"* marks a clear break with the methodology that informed his work prior to his 'Epistemic Desiderata' ('Epistemic Desiderata', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **53** (1993), 527–51). This was the paper which first contained his claim that continuing disputes are sufficient to render it implausible that there is any one thing, epistemic justification, elucidation of which should be the primary task of the epistemologist. Rather, we were told then (and this is the gospel that *Beyond "Justification"* further proclaims), the inchoate notion of epistemic justification is something that epistemology would be better off dispensing with entirely. In fact, even after 1993, Alston continued—intermittently—to lapse into talk of 'epistemic justification', but in this latest work he has finally and resolutely put all such talk behind him and made a start on laying out an epistemology of belief in terms of what he calls the alternative 'epistemic desiderata' approach.

Eschewing epistemic justification in favour of the epistemic desiderata approach does not—perhaps surprisingly—lead to a ploughing up of everything that epistemologists had (at least prior to 1993) planted. On the contrary, Alston takes as his motto, 'Let a thousand flowers bloom' (*passim*). For he believes that it is only when traditional epistemologists are judged as contending to provide the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for epistemic justification and it is judged that success in this task alone is the prize worth having that one must declare at most a single winner. Given that few of the disputants to these traditional debates would suggest that the features to which their opponents attach significance for the project of successfully defining epistemic justification are not epistemically *desirable*, so, once we've refused to enter any of them for the contest that they misguidedly wished to

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enter, whilst we may still score contestants and there may yet still be some losers, there need not be only one winner. For example, 'It is a good thing from the standpoint of the truth goal to have strong evidence for a proposition, at least if it is of interest or importance, whether or not it is exploited as a basis for belief in that proposition. And, obviously, it is a good thing from the standpoint of the truth goal to hold beliefs on the basis of strong evidence ... we are not forced to choose between these desiderata and to eliminate the loser in the competition. Nevertheless, I can ask the question which is more epistemically desirable. And it seems clear that the palm goes to 2 [the holding of beliefs on the basis of strong evidence]', (91). These thousand flowers may bloom then to greater or lesser extents and only in the epistemic desiderata flowerbed, rather than the epistemic justification flowerbed, but bloom they may.

Without the guiding notion of epistemic justification, we need something else to hold these epistemic desiderata together as *epistemic* desiderata—to stake out the flowerbed if you will—and, in response to this need, Alston tells us that the features of belief that we are interested in are those that are 'desirable from the epistemic point of view, the point of view defined by the basic aims of cognition' (19). 'That point of view is defined by the aim of maximizing truth and minimizing falsity' (29). Of course these are not the same thing. A positive and a negative consequentialist reading suggest themselves. Should we maximise true belief (preferring in principle to have ten new true beliefs about trivial matters rather than nine true beliefs about significant matters and one false one about a trivial matter)? Or should we minimise false beliefs (preferring suicide—on the assumption that there's no post-mortem cognition—to educating ourselves)? Alston is sensitive to these concerns and points out, 'We need to be neither too fearful of error nor too hungry for truth. What is the right balance? Perhaps we could think of it this way. Our basis cognitive goal, with respect to any proposition that is of interest or importance to us, is to believe it if and only if it is true. That would seem to balance the positive goal of getting the truth and the negative one of avoiding false beliefs in just the right way' (32). This reader was not himself convinced that this did eliminate all worries of the type that one can find regularly deployed against consequentialist claims of this sort; and of course the introduction of 'interest or importance' threatens to raise more questions than it answers. Be that as it may, with this,

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the flowerbed within which the thousand flowers need to be able to take root if they are to bloom as epistemic desiderata is staked out. What then are the flowers?

Trivially, truth itself could of course feature on the list of epistemic desiderata were it not 'the aspiration of epistemology to be practical, to have a role in shaping our efforts towards true belief' (42). As it is then, Alston focuses on truth-*conducive* desiderata viz. '1. The subject (S) has adequate evidence (reasons, grounds ...) for the belief (B). 2. B is based on adequate evidence (reasons, grounds ...). If 1 and 2 are to be epistemic desiderata, adequacy must be so construed that adequate evidence, and so on, for B entails the probable truth of B. 3. B was formed by a sufficiently reliable belief-forming process. 4. B was formed by the proper functioning of S's cognitive faculties. 5. B was formed by the exercise of an intellectual virtue. As with 1 and 2, 4 and 5 are assumed to be so construed that they entail that B is probably true' (43). This list is not exhaustive of Alston's desiderata: other features of beliefs that though not necessarily connected (in even a probablistic way) with truth are such that their possession is favourable to the acquisition of true beliefs in general are also included. And Alston's discussion of all these desiderata and especially their various interrelations is unfailingly illuminating and thought-provoking, even when one ends up disagreeing with him. An example would be his claim that there is a 'virtual equivalence of a belief's being formed by a reliable belief-forming process and the belief's being based on an adequate ground. I won't go so far as to claim that it would be impossible to reach this insight if one was clinging to the supposition that "justification" picks out a unique centrally important epistemic desideratum of beliefs. But I will testify that it was only after I had adopted the ED approach that this became clear to me. The key to the discovery was the construal of a belief-forming process as a psychologically realized input-belief output function, and the identification of such inputs with "grounds" on which beliefs are based. Once those steps have been taken, then it takes only the assumption that every belief is based on a ground to yield the conclusion that being formed by a reliable belief-forming process and being based on an adequate ground are two sides of the same coin. I can see how a preoccupation with what it takes for a belief to be justified naturally leads to a supposition that these two features of beliefs are in competition for the honor of constituting justification. And this has an inhibiting effect on coming to the realization of their substantial identity' (244). Most readers will wish to read Alston 'unpacking' this

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further; and, when they do so, they will find him unpacking much else along the way, things with which they may well often disagree, but will always find engaging.

Those familiar with the literature may be struck by how much Alston's position in *Beyond "Justification"*, as I have just sketched it, resembles that of Richard Swinburne in his *Epistemic Justification* (OUP, 2001). Both Swinburne and Alston agree that the particular and purportedly rival accounts that other philosophers give of epistemic justification are really accounts of different concepts; and both agree that most kinds of 'justification' (in whichever sense the word is being used by the particular philosophers in question) are worth having because most of these things are indicative of truth. The only difference between Alston and Swinburne, it might seem, it is a terminological one: Swinburne sticks to calling these things differing types of justification; Alston abandons the word 'justification' and calls them instead differing epistemic desiderata. In an attempt to put some clear blue water between himself and Swinburne on this, Alston says, 'So long as there is enough of a unique objective core to the epistemic justifiedness [sic.] of a belief, even if it is disjunctive, enough to make it possible for there to be genuine disagreements as to how to characterize that core, then the positive is thereby distinct from mine, according to which there is no such objective reality picked out by 'justified' in an epistemic context' (28). To this, one cannot help wondering whether if one was really sanguine about allowing that the 'real essence' of epistemic justification might be disjunctive, one would ever find oneself moved by Alston's considerations into abandoning the term: at the first stage, one would surely just read Alston as telling one that justification does indeed have a disjunctive core and giving one a characterisation of that core in terms of things which he wishes us to call 'epistemic desiderata'. Of course one would believe—as Alston does not—that there's a right answer as to how to weight these various disjuncts (call them desiderata in deference to Alston if one wishes) and perhaps one would search Alston's text for evidence of what he would advise one to believe this right answer is. Despite this being of course a misguided question to pose of Alston's text, one would find some evidence there in that he does, as we have seen, 'score' his desiderata. Alston's concern that persistent disputes in this area are reason to suppose that there's no right answer whatsoever would seem to one misplaced. Of course there are persistent disputes at such high level questions in epistemology; is there any area of philosophy in which there are not? But, as

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Alston's scoring itself shows, we have hopes of reaching reach some consensus at least. In any case, on the issue of the difference between his position and that of Swinburne, Alston includes in his desiderata, 'coherence of a belief with a sufficiently coherent system of belief'; 'a belief's being formed by the exercise of an intellectual virtue'; and 'a belief's being formed by the proper functioning of a cognitive faculty'. None of these figure in anything one could construct as—in Alston's terminology—the list of desiderata that Goldman (who also prefigures Alston in this regard to at least some extent) or Swinburne would advance. Thus Alston is in a position to conclude that even Goldman and Swinburne were 'committed to taking there to be no genuine disagreements over what justification is or what its conditions are, because there is no such subject matter to be argued about, they would still differ from my epistemic desiderata approach in the variety of features of belief they recognize as desiderata' (28). So it is that, on any account, *Beyond "Justification"* contains some that is new; on any account it also contains a lot that is of interest. Alston's discussion of even the most familiar topics is of interest because he approaches the topics from the angle afforded him by his unusual—if arguably not unique then—epistemic desiderata approach; and his discussion is unfailingly suffused with the warm glow of the pluralism that he contends follows from this approach. So it is that one reaches the end of the work having been taken via an unusual route through the battlefields of contemporary epistemology by an unusually irenic guide, someone who can undoubtedly 'go placidly amid the noise and haste' with which these battlefields are usually associated.

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