

Thinking about Knowing, by Jay Rosenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, viii +257 pp.
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This book treats several themes and it takes some time and effort to see how they are connected and interwoven. The title, 'Thinking about Knowing', allows for many perspectives, but as one reads the book a certain position is gradually discerned: The author argues against Cartesian scepticism as well as against Cartesian certainty and in favour of knowledge as 'adequately justified belief'.

The book is analytic and argumentative in its style, 'dialectical' as the author calls it, offering detailed discussions of arguments, ideas and examples that have been put forward by René Descartes, Barry Stroud, Wilfrid Sellars, William P. Alston, G. E. Moore, Immanuel Kant, C. S. Peirce, Robert Fogelin, Robert Brandom, Franz von Kutschera, Crispin Sartwell, and Ansgar Beckermann. The arguments are often rephrased, formalized, held against each other and further developed in Rosenberg's somewhat 'dialectical' style. In the end, the heroes are Peirce and Sellars.

Where is the book leading us? What is 'adequately justified belief'? *S* knows that *p* if *S* can adequately justify his or her belief that *p*. But what counts as 'adequate' justification? Well, this depends on us and on the circumstances. After all, it is we who judge whether or not *S* knows that *p*. Our judging so cannot be cancelled or eliminated. What counts as knowledge always depends on various perspectives, ours as well as that of *S*. This is one of the messages of the book. Rosenberg puts it like this: 'we correctly judge that *S* knows that *p* whenever, from our *de facto* epistemic perspective, we judge *S* able adequately to justify his belief that *p*' (pp. 1–2). To ask for more, namely for truth, is just a 'fancy' (p. 219), as Rosenberg says, quoting Peirce, whom he follows to a great extent. Truth, in the end, cannot be the goal of our cognitive endeavours, because we can never know whether we have reached it or not. Instead, justification is what counts. This obliges Rosenberg to deal with perception, which is usually taken as giving us immediate knowledge, knowledge that is fundamental and does not require further justification. Rosenberg deals with this issue in the middle of the book, relying on Sellars, after he has dealt with Cartesian scepticism and Cartesian certainty, *epoché* and inner sense, and before he develops his perspectival account of knowledge, following Sellars and Peirce. Having given this overview of the book as a whole, I will now offer brief accounts and some criticisms of the six chapters that comprise it.

1. 'The Myth of Cartesian Scepticism: Dreaming, Doubts, and Epistemic Closure'. In his first *Meditation*, Descartes leads us to doubt the existence of the external world. He makes us see the 'possibility' of such a doubt. But, Rosenberg asks, what kind of possibility is this? Can knowledge be undermined by a mere possibility? Or is it not rather that we need good reasons to take such a possibility seriously and to accept it? Rosenberg argues that we need such reasons and that Descartes has not offered any, and that therefore 'Descartes' putative demonstration of the possibility of such scepticism' is not 'as intuitive and compelling as it is customarily taken to be' (p. 9). Descartes simply does not 'have any reason at all to believe that he is dreaming' (p. 30). Contrary to Descartes, Rosenberg claims: 'I know lots of other things which imply that I am not dreaming at all. I know that I woke up at about 7:30 this morning and haven't gone back to sleep since then, that it's now about three hours later . . .' (p. 32). I do not find this assertion by Rosenberg convincing. In what sense does all this 'imply' that I am not dreaming now? The knowledge to which he refers might not be (real) knowledge but part of a dream. It seems to me that a similar

confusion about implications appears again in Rosenberg's criticism of Barry Stroud's defence of Descartes' dream arguments. A physicist might be dreaming things he actually knows (when he is awake). He does not know them *through* his dreams, but he still knows them (through other sources). But, Stroud goes on to say that he knows certain other things: 'On the basis of the senses there would have to have been at least some time at which he knew something about what was going on around him at that time' (p. 48), and this, I think Stroud wants to say, is subject to Cartesian doubt as well. Cartesian doubt, so it seems to me, stretches into the past, and it seems to me that Rosenberg does not want to face this as a real possibility. He insists that the observation that 'dreaming that *p* is not a way of coming to know that *p*, does not suffice to establish such an incompatibility [between dreaming and knowing]' (p. 49). But I think it does (when appropriately stretched into the past). Thus I am not sure that Rosenberg has successfully argued against Stroud (and Descartes).

Knowing requires appropriate justifying grounds and dreaming by itself does not provide them. Stroud remarks that 'if what you are dreaming is in fact so you do not *thereby* know that it is' (p. 48). Rosenberg agrees, but he claims that 'the crucial "thereby" seems progressively to simply vanish from Stroud's reasoning' (p. 49). But I do not see that it does. I admit that Stroud later simply says that 'you lack knowledge if you are dreaming', but I read him as saying that you might have been dreaming all along, so that the appropriate grounds for knowledge never were in place.

Similarly, Rosenberg argues: 'I know many things which imply that I am not a brain in a vat [...] e.g. that I ate breakfast in the kitchen a few hours ago' (p. 55, see also p. 58). Again, I would say the implication does not work, because knowledge might never have been in place, that is, I might not really have been in the kitchen. Rosenberg knows that 'the sceptic will also insist, of course, that I don't know any of these other things', but he insists that 'we have so far been offered no sufficient reason to conclude that this is so' (p. 55). That is, Rosenberg insists that the sceptic has to offer *positive* reasons why one should think one sleeps or is a brain in a vat.

2. 'The Myth of Cartesian Certainty: *Epoché* and Inner Sense'. Having attacked Cartesian scepticism, Rosenberg now scrutinizes Cartesian certainty, in particular the move from 'I am now seeing light, hearing a noise, feeling heat' to 'I *certainly seem* to see, to hear, and to be warmed' (p. 61). Adding the 'seeming' seems to buy us certainty. Suspending judgment in a 'sceptical epoché' seems to be a move 'from objectivity to subjectivity, to the "I think" of Descartes' *Cogito, ergo sum*' and 'to the "I think" of Kant's "original synthetic unity of apperception"' (p. 61).

This is a very demanding chapter with a wide scope. Rosenberg discusses Kant's notion of inner sense, original apperception, the possibility of what he calls 'Abnis' (Apperception but no inner sense). He also discusses various meanings and implications of the 'seems'-operator, Sellars' subtle accounts of 'expressing a thought' and of 'looks'-claims, sceptical *epoché*, perceptual experience, and phenomenal versus propositional content. Rosenberg holds a fallibilist position also with respect to first-person claims and claims of inner sense: Subjectivity and self-warranty do not guarantee infallibility. 'Neither *epoché* nor inner sense is a royal road to a realm of special "thin" truths. Cartesian certainty, in short, is and remains what it always was, an epistemic chimera' (p. 100).

This chapter is rich and thought provoking. On the other hand, much work has already been done on Kant and Husserl that would be relevant here, work on perception, the 'I think' and *epoché*, yet Rosenberg does not consider any of it, except for two short pieces, one in English and one in German, by Friedrich Koch, which he uses as a starting point for this chapter. To be creative is a wonderful thing, but if one draws from Descartes, Kant or

Husserl and writes about their ideas, I think one should consider more of the standard secondary literature on the topics in order to make sure that one takes into account what has been done already. (To name just two books of relevance, there are Gerold Prauss' *Erscheinung bei Kant* (1971) and Dieter Lohmar's *Erfahrung und kategoriales Denken. Hume, Kant und Husserl über vorprädikative Erfahrung und prädikative Erkenntnis* (1998).) Rosenberg does quote and translate passages from contemporary German writers, which I think is desirable and unfortunately rare in the Anglo-American tradition. But if one does this, I think it would be desirable to pay attention to the more standard works.

3. 'Immediate Knowledge: The New Dialectic of Givenness'. We should distinguish between how one actually arrives at one's knowledge and how one might justify one's knowledge. The former concerns the *de facto* origin, the latter the *de jure* status. Rosenberg argues that knowledge can be said to be immediate in the first but not in the second sense of 'knowledge'. In his own terms: There can be 'underived' knowledge but no 'epistemically independent' knowledge. (Not a happy choice of words, I think. In following Rosenberg's arguments one easily gets confused, because 'underived' is usually also used with respect to the epistemic status of justification.) Rosenberg follows Sellars, whose views he explains, compares with Brandom's, and strongly defends against those of Alston. Knowing something requires 'placing it in the logical space of reasons' (Sellars). The delicate issue is then the epistemic status of utterances or thought episodes of, for instance, 'This is green'. How can observational knowledge ever get started? Whoever can be said to (be able to) think or say 'This is green', must not only have authority (for instance, the speaker must be reliable) but he or she must also *know* that he or she has that authority. This might seem to be asking for a lot, even too much, but Sellars and Rosenberg (in explaining Sellars) succeed, so it seems to me, in making this point convincingly.

Sellars' position is one of 'strong internalism' and Rosenberg explains how one can distinguish between rules of criticism and rules of action, ought-to-be's and ought-to-do's, to defend this position. All of this is relevant to current discussions about the possibility of what is called 'non-conceptual content', and this makes this chapter of Rosenberg's book very interesting. Unfortunately, he does not point these connections out and does not discuss the issues. Gareth Evans, John McDowell, Fred Dretske, or Christopher Peacocke are never mentioned. The argument against 'concept externalism', that is, knowledge just as true belief, is continued in the following chapters, most explicitly in the last one ('Peircean Enquiry: Knowledge without Truth').

4. 'Everyday Knowledge: When does *S* know that *p*?' In this chapter, Rosenberg discusses examples and accounts of everyday knowledge that have been put forward by William P. Alston, Robert Fogelin, Barry Stroud, Keith DeRose, Michael Williams and David Lewis. He discusses epistemic attitudes versus knowledge and content, defending the relevance of the former, the attitudes, for the latter, knowledge and content. He also discusses performance versus justifying grounds and Gettier examples. Again, Rosenberg argues that there can never be any detached point of view, not even for us philosophers, and that this makes Cartesian scepticism impossible. Instead, an internalist-perspectivalist picture of knowledge is to be preferred.

5. 'Certitude Sustained: Portrait of G. E. Moore as a Perspectivalist'. Rosenberg is 'convinced that Moore's positive contributions to the discussion of philosophical scepticism have not yet been fully appreciated' (p. 172), and he wants to improve the situation. He adopts Moore's position, makes it his own and modifies and further develops it, as he does later with Peirce. They thus become *his* Moore and *his* Peirce, that is, his own version of each of these figures. Fundamental to Moore's position is the claim that the sceptic is, from the very beginning, in a different position from the defender of

common sense. The prosecution (the sceptic) must establish guilt 'beyond reasonable doubt', whereas 'the defence is not charged with establishing innocence at all'. Hence, 'the burden of proof lies with the prosecution' (p. 173). But there is more: It is not that Moore 'ignores' the 'possibility of detached philosophical assessment' (as Stroud says), he 'denies' it (according to Rosenberg, p. 174). To make his point, Rosenberg discusses in great detail a detective story that Stroud offers as an illustration of his arguments. Rosenberg investigates evidence, certainty and reasonableness and in doing so looks for support in Wittgenstein and Austin. In the end, it seems to me, he returns to the old point: 'We do not face the task of discovering whether there are material objects. We do not *arrive* at the knowledge that there are such objects. We *begin* with that knowledge [. . .] Unlike the detective and his assistant, we have no need to gather evidence' (p. 197).

6. 'Peircean Enquiry: Knowledge without Truth'. This is the last chapter of the book. Is knowledge 'justified true belief'? Can truth be the goal of our cognitive efforts? No. Truth is out of reach (argued against Ansgar Beckermann)—at least we would never know whether we have reached it or not. Truth is at best a regulative idea, and we should not even think that it is the limit to which the sciences converge (against Peirce). Additionally, positions of William Alston, D. S. Clarke, John Heil, Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom and Susan Haack are considered.

In the end, Rosenberg sides with Peirce and his perspectivalist-pragmatist accounts. He quotes him as saying: 'We may *fancy* [. . .] that we seek, not merely an opinion, but a true opinion. But put this fancy to the test and it proves groundless; for as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief is true or false [. . .] The most that can be maintained is, that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true' (p. 219). Again, Rosenberg follows Peirce and Sellars in their accounts against scepticism. He quotes Sellars' assertion that empirical knowledge is 'a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy although not *all* at once' (p. 231).

But of course our goal cannot be just *any* kind of 'fixation of belief' (Peirce) or to simply abolish doubt (by any means)—just think of Huxley's *Brave New World!*, as Rosenberg most appropriately points out. Accordingly, he then offers brief discussions of Peirce's 'four strategies for arriving at firm beliefs—the method of tenacity, the method of authority, the a priori method, and the method of science' (p. 233).

In sum, this book offers arguments against scepticism and arguments in favour of a fallibilist, pragmatist, proceduralist and perspectivalist understanding of knowledge as 'adequately justified belief', and it does so from various perspectives and in different, but interconnected approaches. Thus one has to do a good deal of thinking when reading through *Thinking about Knowledge*, and I am sure this will improve one's understanding of the theory of knowledge. I can well imagine this book as a textbook for a challenging graduate course—challenging not only for the students, but also for the teacher, which is quite in the spirit of doing philosophy.

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