

COLIN MCGINN, *The Character of Mind*. Don Mills and New York: Oxford University Press 1982. Pp. vi + 132. US\$19.95 (cloth: ISBN 0-19-219171-3); US\$7.50 (paper: ISBN 0-19-289159-6).

Although this book is touted as 'an introduction to the philosophy of mind suitable for the general reader and beginning student,' it is fair to say that the beginner must at times be quite precocious and the general reader already generally acquainted with the subject matter. It does, however, provide coverage of a range of topics that is satisfactorily representative of central concerns in current philosophy of mind, and is in that sense a good introduction to the area. Its six chapters discuss, respectively, the varied nature of mental phenomena, the mind-body problem, the mind's acquaintance with perceptual and introspectional objects, the relationship between thought and language, action, and the self.

Advanced undergraduates might have fun tinkering with this book. Tyros, as McGinn himself allows, will be taxed — but sometimes unfairly, for he often seems to forget just who his intended audience is. (E.g., paragraph one of McGinn's mind-body chapter baldly states 'we equally recognize ... that the notion of a disembodied mind is [to say the least] of dubious coherence.' 'We' would certainly not include many students in introductory courses.) Also, the style — a profusion of colons and semi-colons, page-long paragraphs, absence of subheadings — doesn't make for easy reading. Moreover, the quality of the discussion is uneven. Some of it proceeds far too swiftly and equivocally, relies on weak arguments, or simply misdirects.

For example, the view that action is movement suitably related to certain causal antecedents such as trying is peremptorily dismissed on the ground that the same movement could have occurred in the absence of those causal antecedents in virtue of which an agent is said to act. One might as well argue that a husband can't be a married *man* because *he* might've missed the wedding! In the chapter on the self, we also find the misleading suggestion that as far as metaphysical criteria are concerned, it's a choice between a reductive criterion or no criterion — this, despite Davidson's famous criterion of event identity and ostensibly McGinn's own consciousness criterion for the mental.

On the positive side, McGinn's action chapter has a nice preamble on such action theoretic notions as active vs. passive and purposive vs. willed behavior. His mind-body chapter is quite tidy and also up-to-date in that it includes a defence of 'non-reductive monism' (= substance monism + property dualism + emergentism) and a discussion of functionalism. His thought and language chapter is an excellent antidote to those views which would have it that language is the measure of all things mental (although the fairly sophisticated self-consciousness he requires in chapter two for the very possession of propositional attitudes may not square with what he says here).

One serious philosophical difficulty concerns McGinn's account in chapter three of perceptual experience and belief derived from perceptual experience. For any experience, having a content is a condition of its existence. For perceptual experience, content and object are independent. Not only may

the content of an experience misrepresent its object, but phenomenologically identical contents could represent different objects and the same object could be represented by different contents. Therefore, McGinn claims, in describing the content of experience singular reference need not be made to the object of experience, and therefore an accurate description of the phenomenological content of an experience will employ only *general* terms to specify how the experience represents the world. The singularity of perceptual experience is fixed not by modes of (re)presentation but by causal relations between the objects and the perceptual experience.

For belief derived from perception, McGinn claims, the concepts under which one brings an object into one's thoughts will match the concepts which specify the content of one's past experience of it. But there is no evident reason to grant this at all, especially in cases where the earlier content misrepresents the object in question. Representations can be transformed or replaced, as processing models of memory remind us. However, McGinn may have other routes to his intended conclusion that the content of a perceptual belief is also specifiable by general concepts.

This latter contention immediately clashes with the mundane fact that we do ascribe singular beliefs, i.e., beliefs whose specification involves mention of particular objects. McGinn's solution is to say that the content of such a belief combines both the perceptual content and the object in question. Many pretty ordinary sorts of belief are ruled out by this solution, though. For example, suppose Jones is blond and that as a result of having just seen his hennaed identical twin I express the belief that Jones has red hair. Ordinarily, one would want to say I have the false belief that Jones has red hair. On McGinn's account, I *must* be mistaken about having the belief I profess to have. Surely this is unacceptable.

McGinn's approach leads to this absurdity because he fails to take seriously the fact that what people can represent to themselves outstrips what is presented to them phenomenologically. A man may have an experience 'as of a rubber duck, but his belief may go farther and take this as an experience of *his* very own rubber duck (for which he has fetishistic regard, let's suppose), whether or not there is a rubber duck present or the right one. Objects don't help us with the singularity of belief here. Nor would they help us with the singularity of a belief one might mistakenly believe oneself to have, since that would presumably be to represent it to oneself as one's singular belief.

Additional difficulties arise out of McGinn's treatment, in the same chapter, of introspective acquaintance with mental states. These concern his incorrigibilistic claim that an experience 'as of' a pain (say) must take a pain as its object. Part of the problem here is terminological. What is wanting in McGinn's treatment throughout is a systematic distinction between that awareness which involves judgment and that which doesn't. To be sure, sensations don't come in experiential disguises the way perceptual objects sometimes do. But McGinn seems to have something more in mind, since on his view introspective awareness serves to bring sensation under general concepts. And there we can go just as wrong as in those perceptual judgements where we bring what we do perceive under the wrong concepts.

No doubt some of the flaws I have pointed to in this book are in another sense virtues, in that they can be quite handily exploited for pedagogical purposes.

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EDGAR MORSCHER and RUDOLF STRANZINGER, eds., *Ethik-Grundlagen, Probleme und Anwendungen*. Boston: D. Reidel (for Hölder-Pichter-Tempsky, Vienna) 1981. Pp. 525. ISBN 3-209-00280-0.

The contents of this large volume are the proceedings of the 5th International Wittgenstein Symposium, which met in Austria during August 1980. The reader who orders the book sight unseen is apt to be surprised, possibly disappointed, at what he gets. The title is slightly misleading, since two of the twelve chapters have nothing to do with ethics. More important, however, is the fact that nine of the chapters have nothing to do with Wittgenstein or his philosophy.

The volume contains ninety-four papers, the work of ninety-five philosophers. (Stephen Körner has two papers, and there are two co-authored papers). Twenty-nine of the papers are in German, including both papers by Körner. There are papers by several well known philosophers, including Kurt Baier, Newton Garver, Jaakko Hintikka, Brian McGuinness, David Pears, Bernard Williams, and Elizabeth Wolgast.

The reader will be struck by the fact that many of the papers are very short, some only two pages, others four to six pages. I estimate that each full page contains 450 to 500 words. It doesn't say so in the editor's introduction, but I think it is likely that at least some of the short pieces in the book are merely summaries of the papers which were delivered at the Symposium. Yet some of the longer short papers, the five and six page pieces, do seem complete as they stand. There is no clear way to determine which papers are which, that is, which are summaries and which not. The reader's frustration will be reduced, perhaps, by the editor's inclusion of a list and index of speakers at the end of the book, complete with mailing addresses. I found two of the very short articles provocative enough to warrant a letter to their authors.

The first ten chapters of the book deal with a broad spectrum of topics in ethics — Chapter 1, Normative Ethics: Chapter 2, Analysis of Ethical Propositions and Ethical Concepts: Chapter 3, Cognitivism in Ethics?: Chapter 4, The