

New Books

The New Hume Debate

Edited by Rupert Read and Kenneth A. Richman

Routledge: London and New York, 2000, 210 pp., £50.00

The New Hume Debate is a collection of papers from the twenty year dispute over a revisionist interpretation of Hume's scepticism. The various proponents of the 'New' interpretation converge on the idea that Hume did after all believe in necessary connexions underlying causal regularities, and was merely denying that we can know the precise nature of causal powers. As Simon Blackburn (not a New Humean but not an Old Humean either) says in one of the papers, there is a fundamental contradiction to which Hume seems to be committed:

- 1 We have no ideas except those that are preceded by suitably related impressions.
- 2 There are no impressions that are suitably related to the idea of a thick necessary connexion between distinct events.
- 3 We have an idea of a thick necessary connexion between distinct events.'

In coping with this contradiction, Galen Strawson, John Wright and other New Humeans tend to argue that Hume is less draconian than he at first seems (and has usually been read) about the first in the trio of assertions. Hume is usually understood to say that we do not really have ideas of enduring physical objects because we can never get outside our discrete, ephemeral impressions to establish the permanence of what they purport to represent, yet Strawson argues convincingly that when Hume talks of 'objects', he sometimes means 'perceptions', as he consistently should according to the standard interpretation, but that often he means 'external objects', and that he speaks of 'matter' and 'sensible qualities' without apparent irony. Furthermore, not only does he take for granted, despite his avowals, that there are continuing external objects, he even indicates the way we can have ideas of them despite having no impressions of their continuity. Strawson, Wright and others maintain that Hume distinguishes the idea as ordinarily formed from 'a relative idea' which can be formed 'without pretending to *comprehend* the related objects' (T68)¹, and differentiates what we can *conceive*, using the normal impression-to-idea route, and what we can *suppose* (T241), which circumvents it. Thus although he undeniably calls the notion of external objects 'unintelligible' and 'incomprehensible' in the light of the theory of ideas, he actually provides (apparently) a way of eluding the exorbitant demands of the theory. 'Necessary connexion',

¹ Hume's works are quoted here in the Selby-Bigge editions, *Treatise of Human Nature* (T), Oxford University Press, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (E), Oxford University Press, 1975.

New Books

which he similarly calls ‘unintelligible’ and ‘incomprehensible’, should, according to Strawson, be construed along the same lines. When Hume calls something ‘unintelligible’, says Strawson, he does not mean that it is incoherent and cannot exist, as in modern philosophical parlance, but simply, in a non-philosophical sense, that ‘we cannot understand it, although it exists’. He considers we are nonetheless able to refer to it; it is just that we can only do so without having a ‘positively descriptively contentful conception’ of it, as when we speak of “whatever it was that caused this appalling mess”.

In their papers, however, Simon Blackburn and the Old Humean Kenneth Winkler point out how sparingly Hume uses the distinctions between ‘supposing’ and ‘conceiving’, ‘relative’ and ‘positive’ ideas, and dispute how explicit, and how central to his philosophy, they are. And Daniel Flage, who gives a scholarly survey of how the concept of ‘relative ideas’ was used in the 17th and 18th centuries, argues that Strawson is actually misusing it, construing the positive versus ‘relative’ ideas distinction along the lines of Bertrand Russell’s knowledge by acquaintance versus knowledge by description. Strawson, he says, conflates the notion of relative ideas with that of linguistic reference. And Strawson does indeed talk as if unless Hume actually endorses the existence of things he refers to, he would not be able to refer to them at all. Whereas surely ‘necessary connexion’, like ‘God’ (an augmented and reified notion of the goodness and wisdom of which we *do* have impressions (*E19*)) and ‘a golden mountain’ (the illegitimate running together of legitimate separate impressions (*ibid.*)), is one of the spurious ideas to which we can meaningfully refer but which fails on examination to connect in the right way to impressions. It is because we lack any impression of an ‘efficacious principle’, Hume says (*T160*) that we have no ‘adequate idea of power or efficacy in any object’, and ‘deceive ourselves’ if we imagine that we do. But, from repeated experiences of the constant sequences of types of object, we are induced to feel that these types of conjunction necessarily occur. Necessity is something, that exists in the mind, not in objects’ (*T165*) and ‘is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thought from one object to another’ (*ibid.*).

Strawson admits that it can sound as if Hume is the Old Hume, but only, he insists, in the *Treatise*. Citing two excerpts from Hume’s letters, which rue premature publication of the *Treatise* and ‘the positive air’ it had thanks to the ‘ardour of youth’, Strawson claims that Hume indicated that the *Enquiry* should be given priority. One of these excerpts begins with Hume’s averring: ‘The philosophical principles are the same in both [books]’ (as if it is style rather than content that he regrets), but Strawson triumphantly takes this as showing that we should read from right to left—take ‘the *Treatise*-clarifying *Enquiry*’ as showing us what we should discount in the *Treatise*. His assumption that the *Enquiry* is more sceptically realist than the *Treatise*, however, is puzzling: the *Enquiry* seems to contain the same argument as the *Treatise*. On page 74, Hume says that ‘the necessary conclusion [of his argument] *seems* to be that we have no idea of

connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings or common life' before suggesting that 'there still remains one method of avoiding this conclusion', a method which is substantially the same as that in the *Treatise*—that 'the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist', the connexion 'which we *feel* in the mind' being the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion. Nothing further is in the case'. (E75)

Of course, the New Humean insistence that Hume in fact provides an escape-route from the ideas-derived-from-impressions stricture might seem simply to bypass the standardly-understood import of some of these standardly-quoted excerpts. And Strawson can vindicatingly quote sentences from the *Enquiry* about how the power or force actuating the machine of the universe is hidden from us (E63), and how experience never instructs us in the secret connexion which binds events together (E66). These excerpts and others certainly could, as Strawson wants, be understood to mean that obviously there are necessary causal connexions but that their nature is hidden from us; but they could equally mean that power 'never discovers itself' to us because it is not there to do so; especially as page 63 begins with an invitation to the reader to accompany Hume on his search for the impression from which the idea of necessary connexion 'may possibly be derived', a process that takes up the next twelve pages and culminates in the 'nothing further is in the case' argument on pages 74 to 75.

More helpful to Strawson's argument is the passage he quotes from the *Dialogues*, which asks whether there may not be an inexorable determinism in the universe. It is only a question, of course, but unequivocally phrased, seeming to expect the answer 'yes', and asked by Philo, who probably represents Hume himself. In fact Strawson could also have pointed to the first sentence of Section 6 in the *Enquiry*, where Hume says that it is only 'ignorance of the real cause of any event 'that leads us to believe in chance, when in fact there is no such thing as chance—a statement which strongly suggests a belief that there *are* necessary connexions which pin down regularities into non-contingency. Strawson argues that the standard interpretation uses what he summarizes as Hume's semantic claim: 'All we can legitimately *manage to mean* by expressions like "causation in the objects" is regular succession', as a mistaken transition from his epistemological claim: 'All we can ever know of causation is regular succession' to what it unfoundedly (according to Strawson) alleges is Hume's ontological claim: 'All that causation actually is, in the objects, is regular succession'. Were Hume to make such a claim, says Strawson, it would be incompatible with his scepticism, since it would be a claim to know what exists and doesn't exist. On the other hand, Strawson insists that Hume 'never really questions the idea that there is Causation, something in virtue of which reality is regular in the way that it is'. And this confident realism, apparently, is perfectly consonant with Hume's scepticism because he simultaneously

New Books

denies that we can know causation's intrinsic nature. As with Locke's 'real essence', and Berkeley's notion of spirit, where we know *that* they are, but not *what* they are, so with Hume's 'force', 'power' and 'necessary connexions'—except that Strawson is careful to depart from this analogy at one point to say that with Hume it is a matter of belief rather than knowledge. After all, he assures us, '[g]enuine *belief* in the existence of X is fully compatible with strict scepticism with regard to *knowledge* claims about the existence of X'.

But how far can Hume be seen as a realist, even if a sceptical one? Blackburn takes Strawson to task for his use of the famous passage on pages 67–8 in the *Treatise* where Hume exuberantly denies the possibility of getting outside our impressions, however much we 'chace our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe'. It takes 'some daring', comments Blackburn wryly, to use this passage as a plea for Hume's realism, sceptical or not, when actually it 'affirms idealism'. Strawson's riposte in his paper to Blackburn's paper is that Locke makes very similar comments about us being stuck in our ideas, but that both Locke and Hume are merely stating their representative realist positions. But surely this too is ahistorical, ignoring that between Locke and Hume came Berkeley, who famously pointed out the inconsistency between Locke's empiricism and his realism—between claiming that we know nothing other than our perceptions and simultaneously claiming that we know what these perceptions resemble. Hume seems to take as red this aspect of Berkeley; and yet surely Blackburn is wrong to say that Hume is an idealist, and Strawson right to say that he isn't (nor is Berkeley, I would say, but that is a different topic) or a phenomenalist either. Like both Locke and Berkeley, Hume has a representative realist starting-point, in that his system is based on sensory perceptions, but, like Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, he kicks away the ladder he has ascended. He uses the vocabulary of representative realism, and even more markedly than his predecessors (the term 'impression' implies far more strongly than the neutral, all-embracing 'idea', from which he subdivided it, that perceptions are stamped on the mind by things or qualities of things outside it); but he also disowns it, airily asserting that it is impossible to know what gives rise to our impressions. It is not that, like Berkeley, he is concerned to reconcile hermetically sealed sensory data with the commonsense things from which they seem forever to debar us, and also to reconcile the resulting solipsism or phenomenism with a world experienced by many individuals; rather, he feels no such need. He is doing epistemology without its complement of metaphysics which leaves it oddly suspended in midair: where is the mind situated, in relation to what, and what is it?—he is not obliged to say. What he does say is that, whatever his philosophical doubts, as an agent he instinctively believes in external objects and necessary causal connexions, and that to do so is clearly beneficial to his survival.

Strawson seizes on this assertion about Hume's 'natural beliefs' as a point in favour of his own argument, but surely it is simply the case that Hume, unlike many philosophers, makes himself satisfactorily subject to

his own theory. He avoids the tendency (exemplified by Plato) to describe the beliefs humans fallibly hold, then go on to demonstrate the errors in these, and finally delineate the truth to which the philosopher (and possibly a select elite) is privy. Instead, he analyses the way reason in general cannot satisfactorily prove what we all tend to believe, but then argues that merely knowing reason's inadequacy in no way militates against us all (*including himself*) carrying on with our beliefs as usual. As an agent, he is forced—'by the current of nature'—to believe in what, as a philosopher, he is forced—in a different way—to doubt. There is an epistemological impasse in which the true state of reality is forever walled out, so that if we *are* right about what we instinctively believe, then we are right for the wrong reasons. Perhaps Strawson is correct—it may be the case that Hume thinks 'there probably are enduring physical objects and real necessary connexions'. But does he think so as a philosopher? Philosopher and agent come apart, yet also meld. Hume's theory of our mechanically compulsive convictions cleverly lassos himself, and this explains at least some of its apparent inconsistencies—for instance, that reason is just an instinct, and yet that reason is discrepant with instinct. Yet sometimes he does seem to assume a philosopher's prerogative and stand outside his experience—and his system—in a way that consistently he should be unable to. It is odd for instance to say that, although necessary connexion is just something felt like a sensation in the mind, we are necessarily caused to believe in it. Is he according himself a privileged metaphysical position from which he is able to observe the connexions people necessarily (if unawares) make about the regular but contingent conjunctions they experience? Or is it that each of us, if attuned to Hume's arguments, would be able, in principle, to observe repeated regularities of association 'in our own minds, or perhaps in those of others, and would thereby be forced to conclude that there are such (mental, internal) regular but contingent conjunctions which necessitate that we believe in the necessity of (external) regular but contingent conjunctions? Whichever, there seems to be a necessary connexion somewhere, in mind or world, and, strictly speaking, Hume should be unable to pronounce on this—unless of course he is so much bound by the 'blind and powerful instinct of nature' (*E151*) that even his philosophical system is under its yoke.

The wheels within wheels and the contradictions, intended or unintended, encourage Anne Jaap Jacobson to say that Hume is speaking in different voices to represent different viewpoints, and provoke New Humeans like Galen Strawson to provide an ingenious explanation of how Hume can break his own stated rules on the theory of ideas. But they thereby lessen the fascination of Hume's thought. And if Hume really is the sceptical realist they claim, what exactly is he purporting to do, and what makes him so revolutionary? Why didn't Kant go on dozing?

Jane O'Grady

New Books

Purple Haze: The Puzzle of Consciousness

By Joseph Levine.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 204, £22.50

In *Purple Haze*, Joseph Levine provides his most extensive and detailed exposition to date of the claim that a materialist or physicalist theory of mind lacks the conceptual resources to fully explain consciousness. Although, metaphysically speaking, materialism is true, there will still be a gap—an explanatory gap—in our understanding of how the interactions of physical entities give rise to the rich qualitative features of a subject's conscious mental life. This, for Levine, is the crux of the mind-body problem, and he is pessimistic that there is a solution to be had.

Arriving at this conclusion requires Levine to trace a narrow path between a two opposing viewpoints: firstly, establishing the truth of materialism as an ontological doctrine and defending it against dualist objections; then arguing that the numerous materialist attempts to resolve the explanatory difficulties posed by qualitative consciousness, either by reduction or elimination, are inadequate on grounds that such physicalist explanations still leave something out. The book thereby provides an interesting critical survey of much of the recent debate about the nature and explanation of consciousness and, whether or not his central claim is ultimately convincing, Levine points to some important weaknesses in several current philosophical positions, even if these do not turn out to be fatal flaws.

Levine formulates his version of materialism as a contingent doctrine in terms of the *realisation* of the mental by the physical, a claim which he defends with a popular causal argument: fundamental physical properties are the only causal bases there are for changes in physical properties, mental properties are causally efficacious with respect to physical properties, so mental properties are realised by physical properties. Realisation is construed as holding with metaphysical necessity, a relation weaker than identity and yet stronger than causal or nomological necessity; properties are understood to be real entities which serve as the relata of causal relations, although their nature is not exhausted by this nor is their causal role a criterion for their individuation; and, for the purpose of giving content to the mind-body problem, 'physical' entities are characterized in terms of being 'non-mental', specifically neither representational nor phenomenal.

The clarity of this presentation is admirable. However the conception of materialism which results is so narrow that there is a danger that some materialists will treat the explanatory deficiencies which Levine finds materialism to have as a *reductio* of his version of materialism or of one of his background assumptions, rather than an inevitable product of materialism *per se*. This is not to say that Levine neglects alternative formulations of materialism. In fact he explicitly considers some of them in the course of defending the premises of the causal argument, but he judges them all to be philosophically unacceptable, sometimes with rather a flippant tone. He discusses Jaegwon Kim's causal exclusion argument, which denies the

causal efficacy of mental properties unless these are identified with physical properties because the fact that a neurological property B realises a certain mental property such as Pain adds nothing to B's causal efficacy with respect to causing actions. Levine is doubtful, however, that there is a suitable version of the type identity theory Kim recommends which can also deal with the variable realisability of mental properties by physical ones. But Levine's arguments here are, by his own admission, not definitive and are hampered further by his lack of an account of what, over and above necessary coextension, is required for property identity. He is also forced to accept that on his view realised properties, such as mental ones, do not cause physical changes in the same sense that fundamental physical ones do, thereby denying the homogeneity of the causal relation, a position which will be unacceptable to some materialists. I think therefore that many materialists would prefer to resist Levine's realisation account of the relationship between mental and physical and persevere with a version of the identity theory in the hope that a straightforward argument for psychophysical identities will avoid his later, pessimistic conclusions about the explanation of consciousness. Although in the final paragraph of the book, he concedes that some 'non-standard' versions of materialism are untouched by his arguments, it seems that some decidedly standard versions remain to be more seriously considered.

To defend the causal argument for materialism, Levine also rejects the epiphenomenalism about qualia supported by property dualists such as David Chalmers as well as some materialists, suggesting that without a good argument there is no reason to deny the intuition that, for instance, it is the hurtfulness of the pain which makes me move my hand from the fire: '[I]t just seems crazy' to deny that phenomenal consciousness has a causal role.¹ He responds to one such argument in Chapter 2—the 'Conceivability Argument'—which would, if successful, refute materialism by establishing the metaphysical possibility of 'zombies', beings which are physically identical to conscious subjects and yet lack conscious experience, a conclusion which would also entail epiphenomenalism about phenomenal properties if the causal closure of the physical is to be preserved. Levine accepts the first 'Conceivability Premise' of the argument that the existence of zombies is conceivable, on the basis that 'from a complete physical description of a creature like myself, and only from that description, I could not derive *a priori* that the creature was conscious (or what kinds of conscious states it had)'.² But he rejects the inference from conceivability to metaphysical possibility by taking a somewhat novel approach.

The anti-materialist maintains that his Conceivability Argument cannot be blocked by what Levine calls the 'Distinct Properties Model' (DPM) of why it seems to be conceivable that *a posteriori* necessities, such as Water = H₂O, are false, because this model is inapplicable in the case of mental properties; unlike physical properties, mental properties are not picked out

¹ p. 23.

² p. 44.

New Books

by contingently related properties which in this world happen to be satisfied by the same object or property and are thereby able to serve as distinct modes of presentation of their referent, creating illusion of contingency. The hurtfulness of the pain is not contingently related to it, but it is essential, and so if it is conceivable that Pain is not identical to Brain State B (say), we cannot explain away the appearance of contingency in the standard way. So, unlike the case of water not being identical to H_2O , the conceptual possibility is a genuine one and describes a metaphysically possible situation in which Pain is not identical to Brain State B. Levine suggests the materialist has two options here: to accept the Distinct Properties Model for *a posteriori* physical necessities and the anti-materialist's claim that it is indeed inapplicable to phenomenal properties, but to argue that the apparent non-identity of phenomenal properties with physical ones can be explained away in another way due to certain exceptional features the former possess; or, the materialist can reject the Distinct Properties Model and deny the disanalogy between *a posteriori* physical necessities and psycho-physical ones. Rather than make an exception of mental properties, Levine chooses the latter option and offers two alternative accounts of the semantics of *a posteriori* necessity statements. The conceptual possibility of zombies is on a par with the possibility of zombie- H_2O (H_2O which is not water), since we can no more derive the fact that a glass is full of water *a priori* from its chemical description than we can derive *a priori* that a creature has conscious experience from its physical description. Contrary to the DPM theorist's account of what is conceivable *a priori*, it is a genuine conceptual possibility that Water is not H_2O ; but, since we know that it is metaphysically impossible that Water is not H_2O , the conceptual possibility does not entail metaphysical possibility. The case of zombies is analogous, Levine claims, and so the conceptual possibility of zombies does not threaten the truth of materialism.

In Chapter 3, Levine presents his argument for the explanatory gap, and it is here I think that his position begins to look internally unstable. His suggestion of an explanatory gap is initially plausible. It is a manifestation of the existence of such a gap that we can imagine that Jackson's Mary actually learns something as she emerges from her black and white room and experiences red for the first time; not everything is explained by the physical facts since the materialist explanation of the world which Mary knew in its entirety while in confinement did not enable her to deduce what it would be like to experience red. But because of his strategy against the Conceivability Argument in the previous chapter, he is not entitled to invoke the truth of the Conceivability Premise *simpliciter* in order to infer that qualitative consciousness is not intelligible in purely physical terms, since zombie H_2O (H_2O which is not water) is as conceivable as a zombie. Since we know there is no explanatory gap in the case of water and H_2O , there must after all be something distinctive about qualitative consciousness which makes its explanation a problem if Levine is to argue convincingly for the explanatory gap.

Here he introduces the concept of a 'gappy' identity, an identity which

unlike 'pure' identities of the Water = H₂O variety, legitimately calls for further explanation. There is a 'sharp epistemic contrast' between physical a posteriori necessities and psycho-physical ones, he argues, because in the latter case I have a substantive, determinate conception of the redness of my conscious experience being 'for me' in a certain way, a relationship I do not bear to the neurological state with which my experiencing red is supposed to be identical; there is 'a genuine cognitive significance to our wondering how these two conceptions could be conceptions of the same thing.'³ On the basis of this notion of a gappy' identity, he draws a distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' conceivability. When a metaphysically impossible situation is thinly conceivable relative to a representation R, we can derive a representation R' relative to which the situation is inconceivable, and therefore not metaphysically possible, by invoking an a posteriori identity; however, when a situation is *thickly* conceivable, we can only derive a formally inconsistent representation R' according to which the situation is inconceivable via a gappy identity statement. Thus, while zombie H₂O and zombies are both thinly conceivable, zombies are also thickly conceivable, since we can only derive a representation relative to which zombies are inconceivable by recourse to the gappy psycho-physical identities between qualia and neurological properties. The explanatory gap is a product of the identities in the psycho-physical case being gappy; that is, legitimately calling for further explanation.

However, the circularity of this formulation is only mitigated by Levine's intuitive gesturing at the 'substantive', 'determinate' nature of his qualitative consciousness, the redness of the experience which plagues him throughout the book, and except for the strong and rather contentious constraint that explanation inherently involves deduction, there is very little clarification of what counts as explanation, and thus when a statement legitimately calls for further explanation. Gappiness, says Levine, is a matter of what we find intelligible, which in the end is a matter of how we represent the world. But then, there seem to be some perfectly plausible questions that the materialist can raise in an attempt to start bridging the gap: What is it about the way I represent the world which makes the identity of a phenomenal property Q with a physical one B unintelligible? What is it about the mechanisms of representation that make it difficult to represent the identity Q = B? Or, if we take Levine's intuitions about qualia on board, what role is Q (= B) playing here in my representational cognition such that my believing that Q = B is problematic and it is possible to represent a situation where Q is not identical to B? Levine does not present good reasons why such questions are in principle unanswerable aside from the rather shaky intuitions about the intimacy of a subject's relations with her own conscious states.

Moreover, with the distinction between thin and thick conceivability, Levine's materialism is threatened by the Conceivability Argument anew. Surely, the property dualist will argue, if zombies are thickly conceivable,

³ p. 84.

New Books

they are also metaphysically possible? The gappiness of an identity is surely best explained by the fact that it is not an identity at all but, at most, a nomologically necessary correlation between a phenomenal property and a physical one. Levine addresses this renewed threat, but I do not think his response here is entirely convincing. We do not have to accept the anti-materialist's argument for the distinctness of the phenomenal and physical properties, but, if the materialist wants to avoid postulating brute metaphysical necessities—and as Chalmers has recently argued, he should want to do so on pain of avoiding modal mystification⁴—is not enough to say that phenomenal properties are realised by physical ones, they must be identical. The materialist has three options according to Levine: to hold out for physical properties which yield non-gappy psycho-physical identities, in effect denying that zombies are thickly conceivable; to adopt a form of eliminativism to explain away gappiness; or just deny that the property dualist's crucial assumption that gappiness must entail a distinction in properties by explaining gappiness, our peculiar cognitive relation to qualitative character, another way.

The latter part of the book is spent surveying and rejecting attempts to take the former two options, and Levine chooses the third to maintain his own materialist position but, he warns, 'gappiness' is 'really puzzling' because the causal and nomic relations available to the materialist seem ill-suited to account for qualitative character; the materialist is left with an explanatory gap. However, since he considers gappiness to be inexplicable, it is unclear here whether Levine is entitled to reject the property dualist's assumption that gappiness entails property distinctness in order to preserve his materialism, especially since he lacks a criterion of property identity. His predicament would not be so severe had he an independent argument for materialism, but the original causal argument crucially depends upon phenomenal properties not being epiphenomenal with respect to physical properties, an intuition which was to be accepted unless the epiphenomenalist produced a good argument against it. Now, with the argument based on the thick conceivability of zombies, the property dualist *has* presented one such good argument and so it seems like an *ad hoc* response on the materialist's part simply to deny the crucial assumption that gappiness entails property distinctness, in order to preserve the causal efficacy of phenomenal properties and with it the causal argument for materialism. Only if zombies are thickly conceivable are we left with an explanatory gap, but once we accept that they are thickly conceivable, then it appears that materialism can only be upheld by recourse to *ad hoc* assumptions and intuitions.

Levine's position in *Purple Haze* is probably not explicitly internally inconsistent, but it is certainly unstable and I doubt that many materialists will be convinced that accepting the explanatory gap along with their materialism is their only option. After all, there are another two materialist alternatives to be explored in the light of the Thick Conceivability

⁴ David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

Argument, neither of which result in an explanatory gap, and Levine's narrow conception of materialism make his criticisms of these far from definitive. On the other hand, I suspect that property dualists will be loath to accept that he has established materialism successfully in the first place. The deep puzzle which Levine finds to be central and intractable in our thinking about consciousness seems to be a product of his own deeply puzzling philosophical position; which is not to say that consciousness will be easy to explain, but there are certainly more plausible and congenial starting points for the understanding of consciousness than the explanatory dead end that Levine presents.

Sophie R. Allen

A Theory of Sentience

By Austen Clark

Oxford University Press, 2000. ix + 288 pp. £40 Cloth

There's the pig. There's its pinkness. Somehow, in the appropriate presence of light and myself, these give rise to 'stimuli', where a stimulus is best thought of as 'a particular episode of irritation of transducer surfaces' (p. 4; although Clark at other times uses 'stimulus' to refer to the ordinary worldly causes of whatever goes on in us when we have an experience—i.e. pigs and the like: thus p. 114). But what hits me (*inter alia*) is the 'phenomenal property' of pinkness, experienced as a property of a worldly object such as a pig, something that the stimuli 'present' (*ibid.*). In the circumstances I have a visual experience as of a pink pig. But there is more. Corresponding to the pig's pinkness is a 'qualitative property ... in virtue of which things out there ... appear as they do'. A qualitative property 'is a property of an internal state in virtue of which something else ... has a phenomenal property' (p. 2). So, in Clark's story, there's the pink pig, the irritations it causes on my surfaces, my experience as of a pink pig (which involves phenomenal properties), and the internal state in virtue of which I have this experience (which has qualitative properties).

The weasel phrase is 'in virtue of', which Clark uses a lot. It might just be meant in a causal spirit: the thought might just be that I can't experience the pink pig unless a lot of stuff goes on inside my skin (a lot needs to happen after the light hits my eyes). Then 'qualitative properties' enshrine whatever causal powers these inner happenings happen to have, and it can't sensibly be denied (even by old-style behaviourists) that there are such properties and causal powers, in this world anyway. More than this, as Clark points out, the facts of experience (how our quality space strikes us) 'provide surprisingly potent insights into what must be going on inside [our] visual apparatus' (p. 8). So, for example, the fact that the appearance of any coloured light can be matched by adjusting the intensities of just three distinct primaries suggests that 'there are at least three, and probably no more than three, distinct types of colour sensitive recep-

New Books

tors ...' (p. 9). All of this is respectable science (as far as I know) and perfectly innocuous causal talk. And Clark signs up explicitly to this causal way of construing 'qualitative properties': 'we make inferences about what the qualitative character of sensations must be in order to explain aspects of our relatively direct acquaintance with how things look' (p. 10).

Fine. But anyone educated in the analytical tradition will be conditioned into giving these causal speculations a phenomenological spin, into seeing this talk about 'sensations' and 'qualitative properties' as ushering in the brute way that things strike us before we get all sophisticated and deem ourselves as struck by the likes of pink pigs. And despite the explicit disavowal, Clark appears to be no exception. Almost from the start he is happy to speak thus:

A sense impression of red is endowed with some property in virtue of which that sense impression is an impression of red, and not of some other colour. This property is not redness, exactly, but it is tied by an analogous structure of resemblances and differences, to colour properties.... The sense impression has the qualitative character red*, and in virtue of being red*, is a sense impression of red, and not (say) of blue (p. 9).

I find it hard to hear such talk as *merely* causal: and it is anyway said to be talk about 'properties of [a] creature's states of mind' (p. 10). Things are not really helped by Clark's rather baffling decision to follow C. I. Lewis in using 'quale' ambiguously, now to mean *phenomenal property*, now to mean *qualitative property* (p. 3); nor by his use of 'quality' as the word to describe features of experience.

The occupants of quality space are not stimuli. Instead they are something distinct: the qualities those stimuli present. These are, precisely, phenomenal properties, or properties of appearance (p. 7).

And things are made downright perplexing once talk of 'qualitative identity' is allowed to creep in, as in the claim that we might 'consider the question whether ... two presentations are qualitatively identical ...' (p. 59; recall it is *phenomenal* properties which are supposed to be presented by *stimuli*; cf. p. 159 where we have 'qualitatively identical patches of yellow'. Presumably they should either be phenomenally identical or yellow* patches (patches*?)). All of this comes to something of a head at p. 65ff, culminating in 'The distinction between the spatio-temporal and qualitative components of variations in phenomenal appearance mimics the distinction between reference and predication' (pp. 74–5). Should that be 'spatio-temporal*' (cf. p. 90)? Probably, since the official line is that we are still talking about 'machinery yielding a feature' and 'machinery identifying the location at which the feature appears' (p. 75). But then how can these bits of (neurophysiological: p. 12) machinery be distinct 'components of variation in phenomenal appearance' without themselves enjoying a phenomenological existence? In the last analysis I simply could not determine whether all of this is a case of quite extravagant terminological

slackness (cf. pp. 156–7 where ‘qualitative’ is quite manifestly being used to mean *phenomenal* in a discussion of sense data theories), or substantial underlying confusion. (One last example: at one point something called ‘a *merely* phenomenal field’ is contrasted with the mereological sum of things in the field of view (pigs and the like) which officially make up the visual field (p. 114; see below.) Should that have been ‘merely qualitative field’? But if so, he says it can contain such things as a ‘sensation of dark blotch’ (ibid).)

In the first two chapters Clark introduces the general outlines of his view of quality space, then makes an important point: in order for such a thing to be a *space*, we need to speak of more than qualia (in both senses). What is also needed is a distinct way of representing how the phenomenal properties we perceive are perceived as laid out in the world around us. Such spatial representation is independent of questions of qualitative similarity (p. 58ff), and at the bottom of the resulting theory of sentience is a two-part (or ‘partitioned’ p. 59) structure which somehow accomplishes feature-placing (p. 69ff). As already remarked, this two-part structure ‘is akin to the difference between reference and predication’ (p. 73): the analogue of reference does the placing and that of predication ushers in the features. The idea, and its possible neurological underpinnings, is further explored in chapter 5.

The arguments of chapter 3 fill out Clark’s view of feature-placing by trying to, establish that the only needed notion of *visual field* is that of the ‘field of view’, which is simply ‘a mereological sum—the scattered totality—of physical phenomena seen’ (p. 88): thus we have space-time regions and the e.g. porcine physical phenomena which occupy them. There is no need, he continues, for any further notion of visual field (say as a manifold of sense data or ‘array of impressions’ (p. 89), or as a ‘virtual world’ (p. 92)), arguing that neither the existence of illusions and hallucinations, nor that of afterimages, necessitate such posits. The treatment here is generally quite compelling (pp. 89–108); and as often, Clark draws upon a quite extensive knowledge of the facts of brain science and of the physiology of perception.

The main concern of chapter 4 is to link his bottom-line feature-placing structure with work on demonstratives (e.g. by Evans and Kaplan), and the main point is that the feature-placing apparatus is in place (e.g. in bats and owls) long before the conceptual capacity to identify and keep track of individuals is (pp. 138–156). This is unexceptionable, until we remember that the feature-placing structure is supposed to characterise the bottom-line sentience of a ‘creature’s states of mind’. It is not merely terminological whether the underlying causal structures in a minded creature are themselves part of its mind: for example, one contemporary high-road to traditional Cartesian scepticism can be made to start from the supposition that maybe I’m a vat-brain. But this involves, precisely, utterly controversial and philosophically profound assumptions about the mentality or otherwise of the vat-brain’s states. Clark’s procedure just forecloses on all of this. The book ends with a relatively free-standing chapter on colour

New Books

and its physical underpinnings, followed by an Appendix whose aim is to show that things called 'sensations of red' are anyway brain processes (p. 255).

Overall I found the book very difficult to assess, even ignoring the terminological problem/underlying confusion. Much of it I simply cannot recognise as academic philosophy of mind: rather, much of it comprises extended descriptions of and speculations about advances in brain science and particularly the physiology of perception. Fascinating and important though this material is, it's just not philosophy of mind. And if the underlying thought is *so much the worse for philosophy of mind*, then so much the worse for the underlying thought.

Gregory McCulloch

Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation

By Richard Sorabji

Clarendon Press: Oxford 2000, pp xii + 499, £30.00, ISBN 019-8250053

Love, lust, anger, hatred, fear, disgust, depression, exultation, pity, shame: the list can be extended indefinitely, or else contracted to a set of three, or four, or seven, or eight 'basic emotions'. Most of us suppose that such emotions are sometimes appropriate, even though they may also be indulged too much or on the wrong occasions. To be wholly unemotional seems hardly human. In other moods, or moments of public debate, 'emotion' of any kind gets in the way of reason. There is an unacknowledged tension in our attitudes to our own and others' 'emotions': do we pursue *metriopatheia*, moderate emotion, or *apatheia*? It is a mark of ignorance or inattention to suppose that Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean is tautologous or banal or feeble (in suggesting that the right amount to feel or do is neither too much nor too little, or that it's always wrong to be *very* angry); on the contrary, it is a substantial claim that the various forms of 'apathy' are vices, a claim that later Stoic and Stoicising philosophers and theologians dispute. There are real questions here: are emotions inevitable or desirable? Should we aim to moderate or eliminate them? How do we tell when we are being 'too emotional' or 'not emotional enough'? What would genuine Stoic apathy be like—since we can hardly think they meant to praise the indolent or psychopathic?

Richard Sorabji's Gifford Lectures address these serious questions through a scholarly analysis of philosophic writings from Plato to Augustine, via Aristotle, Chrysippus, Poseidonius, Seneca, Galen, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius and others. This is a substantial contribution to scholarly and philosophical debate about all these authors, and about the historical effect of Stoic and Stoicising worries about 'emotion'. It is also a demonstration of the psychotherapeutic resources available in the Western tradition of philosophy. Advocates of *metriopatheia* as well as *apatheia* have an interest in avoiding *some* emotion.

Anger is sometimes, on the Aristotelian account, correct, but never envy or *Schadenfreude*. The mainstream Stoic advice is to reconsider the opinions that accompany or constitute emotions such as anger: have I *really* been wronged, and would it *really* be appropriate to retaliate? Other advice, another thread within that same tradition, would be to consider what food, drink, climate, bodily exercise exacerbates a less focused anger. Am I angry because, mistakenly or not, I think that I am wronged? Or do I imagine myself wronged or behave as if I thought I was wronged because of humours, hormones or insidious demons? Poseidonius, it seems, disputed Chrysippus's judgment that we could always be *argued* out of anger and the rest: sometimes perhaps more often—it is better to eat, or exercise, or force oneself to smile. Even a 'talking' cure for all emotion may not be strictly argumentative: Ovid's joking *Remedy for Love* is redescription, like Iris Murdoch's suggestions on how to like one's daughter-in-law. Notoriously, when embracing one's spouse or child, remember one embraces a mortal creature. When mourning that same creature, remember how we would feel about a stranger's death and what advice we'd give the mourners then. If afflicted by vanity, recall the occasions when we were instead afflicted by lust (which should be sufficiently comic to make vanity ridiculous). If afflicted by the noon-day demon of *akedia* (*accidie*, depression), do something useful instead of counting the pages we still have to read or checking whether there are any biscuits (p. 362).

Even those who admire *apatheia*, and reckon that the wise are 'apathetic' (though not in the more usual modern sense), agree that even the wise may be physically affected by circumstance. A philosopher on board a storm-driven ship may turn pale and tremble, even though he does not suppose that he is in real (that is, moral) danger. The physical effects, the 'first movements', must be distinguished, in mainstream Stoicism, from an 'emotion', which would include the mistaken opinion that financial loss, dismemberment and death are evils. Paradoxically, the wise are like irrational animals in this: according to Seneca (see p. 377) the jitters of animals do not amount to fear or anger since such movements 'quickly subside and change into the opposite state, and after becoming intensely frantic (*sae-vire*) or jittery (*expavescere*) they start feeding, and quiet or sleep immediately follows their mad bellowing and rushing about' (Seneca *On Anger* 1.3.8). Sorabji suggests that Augustine was misled by Aulus Gellius in this. Gellius, in repeating Epictetus' remarks about the physical effects experienced even by the wise on board the ship, moves from saying that even the wise 'grow pale' (*palescere*) to saying that they 'grow jittery' (*pavescere*). Augustine concluded that this was indeed an emotion properly so called, rather than a physical effect to which the sage did not assent, and that the Stoics, in effect, were advocating *metriopatheia* not *apatheia*. It is not wrong (or else it is inevitable), he supposes, that we are not indifferent to possessions, life and health. The one exception is lust: other emotions may be good 'in moderation', while lust and the relevant movements, being wholly outside the will's control (either to arouse or quell them), ought to be avoided absolutely, or indulged only for health or procreation—but

New Books

because of the Fall, will not be. Sorabji gives a clear account of the dispute between Augustine and the Pelagian Julian on this point, suggesting that Julian won the philosophical argument and Augustine the political. ‘The Pelagian view that lust is a good thing, which may be put to bad use, is far more attractive than Augustine’s view that lust is a bad thing which may, in marriage, be put to a good use’ (p. 417). Of course, the fact that it is more *attractive* need not make it *true*—and perhaps Augustine had some experience on his side. Whatever might have been true before the Fall, he could reasonably say, our present experience of lust is bound to be distracting, bound to make what would otherwise seem wrong seem wholly and indubitably right, bound (a point that Sorabji does not address) to involve domination and the violation of bodily integrity. Sorabji offers ingenious and partly convincing counters (but of course we *want* to be convinced) to some of Augustine’s specific arguments. If males cannot get or diminish their erections just by will, it is equally true that we cannot salivate or cease to salivate at will (Sorabji correctly notes that Augustine writes from a male perspective, but is perhaps wrong to suppose that females have no similar problem). If we surrender to lust, it is equally true that we surrender to sleep (and that the indolent do so too much does not establish that we should never sleep at all). He could have added that the supposed absence of discursive thought at orgasm cannot be all bad, since just such an absence is welcomed by Plotinus as a divinely inspired drunkenness which carries us by the surge of the wave of intellect into a ‘mad’ state of unthinking union, at rest in the beloved (*Ennead* VI.7.35, 24–7; 6, 17–18; see VI.9.4). Perhaps that is why our ordinary lusts, even when decently moderated, are inferior: they distract us from the proper goal. And perhaps Sorabji pays too little attention to Augustine’s own later recognition of how badly lust had led him to behave—even though by the standards of the day, he had behaved quite well. Perhaps it is possible to grow pale and tremble without the soul’s assent, or any true emotion; it is not so clear that it is possible to be aroused and not consent, even if shame or reason forestalls the outward act.

Another considerable contribution is Sorabji’s account of the emergence of a distinctive idea of ‘the will’ (*voluntas*). Augustine, he says, brings together a bundle of ideas: *voluntas* belongs to the rational soul (rather than being found in any animal with wants), is free and the locus of responsibility, and can be weak or strong. It is involved in any action, even those we seem to do under compulsion, in intellectual attention, imagination and assent. It can be perverted from its proper focus to vainglory, and undue pride in one’s separate being (as Plotinus also supposed). Sorabji hints that some such cluster of ideas might be important for the understanding of human action, but explicitly concludes that Plato, Poseidonius and Galen were more reasonable in seeking to handle them separately. It may be that in contrasting theories of *the will* and theories of *reason*, he makes too large a distinction. The issue for both may be, as he hints, the direction and mode of our *attention*. Whether we think of that as will or reason may not be as significant as some have thought. Or else, in isolating

the will, Augustine and others successfully discriminated different functions. What looks from one angle like a *clustering* of ideas may, from another, be a new discrimination, and perhaps *voluntas* often means a specific want, and not a distinct 'will' at all.

This volume will be an exceptionally rich resource for students of philosophers and theologians of the period that Sorabji has made his own. It is also an exceptionally rich resource for anyone who seeks in philosophy what still attracts the young to 'do philosophy': some way of getting control of our own distracted and mysterious minds and affections. It has become a rhetorical trope in recent times that 'philosophers' or 'modern philosophers' make only verbal distinctions, ignore all serious issues and are archetypal but financially unsuccessful nerds. Sorabji offers evidence that distinctions matter, that there are techniques for understanding and taking proper charge of our own selves, and that these are all still matters of great concern even to 'modern' philosophers. He also leaves, understandably, many questions unanswered. What *is* it like to be 'apathetic' in the sense that Stoics from Chrysippus to Evagrius to Spinoza to the 'new stoicism' of Becker might approve? What *should* be the role of any particular attachments in the properly ordered heart? Would it make sense to hope that our manifold inadequacies be cured by purely chemical or physiological means? And was Evagrius right to sense that 'bad thoughts' are demonic interventions?

Stephen R. L. Clark