

Book Reviews

The Mind in Nature

By C. B. Martin

Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. xvi + 224. ISBN 978–0–19–923410–3. £27.50 (hbk).

The Mind in Nature is C. B. Martin's long-awaited *magnum opus*, setting out in comprehensive detail the system of ontology and the associated philosophy of mind that he had been developing throughout the fifty years prior to its publication. Aspects of this all-embracing metaphysical theory have appeared in print before from time to time, in the form of journal articles, and have also manifested themselves in influences that Martin's work has had on that of colleagues and other admirers of his approaches to many key issues in the philosophy of mind and nature. One of these is Martin's long-time collaborator, John Heil, who has co-authored a number of important papers with Martin and recently presented his own metaphysical system in an excellent book, *From an Ontological Point of View* (Oxford University Press, 2003). Heil was the ideal editor of Martin's manuscript, and the result is a work that will surely be recognized as a modern classic, with a standing and an importance in analytic philosophy comparable with those of works by the best-known figures in its history, such as W. V. Quine, Hilary Putnam, Donald Davidson, David Lewis, and D. M. Armstrong. *The Mind in Nature* has an enormous breadth of vision combined with a close but uncluttered attention to detail – the sort of synthesis that can be achieved only by the finest of philosophical intellects after a lifetime's pondering over the deepest problems that philosophy throws up. The book is a truly fitting memorial to its author, who sadly died in the year of its publication after a long period of illness.

The key to Martin's system is his thoroughly original account of *dispositions* or *powers*, in terms of which he constructs a general theory of properties as particulars – rather than universals – which are at once dispositional and qualitative in character. On this basis he provides us with a new way of understanding causation and a new way of seeing how the human mind, with its distinctive powers of conscious representational thought, can be seamlessly integrated into the rest of physical nature. He shows us how complex dispositional systems can make use of representations for various control functions, in many cases without any need for consciousness, and how

conscious systems are natural elaborations of unconscious ones – and thus why there is no mysterious and inexplicable gap in nature between the unconscious world and the conscious mind. He explains how it is in the very nature of dispositions to ‘point beyond themselves’, to their actual or possible manifestations, in a way that already embodies the roots of the *intentionality* or ‘aboutness’ that is characteristic of mental states. The theory of the human mind that Martin develops on this basis is not only metaphysically cogent but also empirically well-informed, drawing on and entirely consistent with the findings of current neurophysiology.

Some of the central features of Martin’s philosophical system are already well known to *aficionados* of his work, including his famous refutation of conditional analyses of disposition statements, his rejection of universals and his contention that all properties are at once both dispositional and qualitative in nature, his origination and use of the truthmaker principle as a guiding light in metaphysics, his rejection of the ‘layered’ view of the world that dominates current thinking in the philosophy of mind, his antipathy to metaphysical thinkers who project features of language on to reality or, worse, who espouse language-based anti-realism, and his and Heil’s realist solution to Wittgenstein’s problem of rule-following whose supposed sceptical implications for semantics were notoriously endorsed by Saul Kripke. All of these issues are discussed in the book, some chapters of which involve careful re-workings of relevant parts of some of Martin’s previously published papers. Other material, however, together making up a considerable proportion of the book, is entirely new, especially the detailed elaboration of Martin’s disposition-based theory of representational use, both unconscious and conscious, culminating in his wholly original account of human language use and acquisition and his associated theories of conscious perception and imagery. In several places, but especially in his last chapter, where he briefly discusses the implications of Einsteinian relativity for our theory of space and time, Martin throws new light on some of the most fundamental questions in ontology, such as whether we should continue to adhere to a metaphysics of individual objects or ‘substances’ moving in space and persisting through time, or instead treat space-time itself as a basic substance. Throughout the book, we see from time to time the benign influence of Martin’s favourite philosopher, John Locke, to whose ideas he traces the origins of many of his own.

This book is assured a wide readership, both amongst professional philosophers and amongst their students at both graduate and undergraduate level. It deals with abidingly important issues and offers strikingly original and cogent answers to some of the longest-standing problems in the philosophy of mind and nature. All of its readers will find that it repays frequent re-reading – not because it is at all lacking in clarity, but because it is such a rich source of ideas and arguments. It will certainly figure prominently on student reading lists for courses in metaphysics, the philosophy of mind, and the

philosophy of science. It will also engender a substantial and prolonged secondary literature, examining and building on its central claims. Altogether, it is a fitting testimony to the lasting importance of Martin's contribution to philosophical thought and will enable that contribution to receive its proper recognition and achieve its deserved influence in the years to come.

The Mind in Nature is beautifully written, in Martin's inimitably sharp and spare style, which will immediately call to mind his speech and conversation in those who have had the good fortune to have encountered them. Although it deals in places with some very complex and difficult problems, it is never cluttered with technical verbiage or unnecessary formal symbolism. Indeed, it is a perfect model of philosophical clarity. Martin has a knack of anticipating the questions that will come into his readers' minds as they progress through the book and almost always supplies a compelling response to them. The overall organization of the book could not be improved upon, with successive chapters building only on material that appears beforehand so as to progress from very general issues in fundamental ontology, stage by stage, to very specific ones in the philosophy of mind and language. No better example of how to write a work of philosophy in the analytic tradition could be imagined. With Martin's death that tradition has lost one of its greatest exponents, but thanks very largely to Heil's unstinting and selfless editorial labours, Martin's voice and thought live on in the pages of this book for new generations of philosophers to admire and ponder over.

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Enjoyment: The Moral Significance of Styles of Life

By John Kekes

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Philosophers tend to take themselves seriously – too seriously – and they like talking about duty and obligation and virtue and welfare. So it is very nice to come across a book by a philosopher on enjoyment: it promises some welcome relief from the usual heavy fare a philosopher offers. This is especially so in the case of this book, since John Kekes is interested in the notion of individual style, much neglected as a focus for concern amongst philosophers.

The book is divided into five parts: part I is introductory; part II explores the concept of a style of life; part III relates the notion of styles of life to morality; part IV offers discussions of 'case studies' of different styles of life: Madame Goesler from Trollope's so-called Palliser novels; Yukio Mishima; Cato; Hume; Benvenuto Cellini; Montaigne; and the final part provides some concluding comments on the book as a whole.