

might be than is typically the case. The orthodox naturalist takes dispositions to be whatever has the subjunctive properties that kinds such as salt, glasses, chunks of iron, photocells, and landmines can have. These are simple stimulus-response, cause and effect, type of dispositions. Salt is disposed to dissolve in water, etc. But then there are dispositions to respond by saying or thinking something. These, in McDowell's words, are "habits of thought and action" (McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 84). They are *second nature* to us. Such dispositions are not part of our psychological hardwiring, our innate natural endowment, like the first kind. Rather, they are the product of various learning processes and practices. Bilgrami adds a third conception. This is a "preparedness to accept criticism" type of disposition (p. 139). Without such dispositions, there would be no learning anything at all. And they enable us to develop and cultivate the second kind of dispositions. There are thus at least two senses in which dispositions cannot simply belong to the explanatory resources of the orthodox naturalist.

It is widely, if not universally, agreed that dispositions have causal powers. Bilgrami finishes his paper with a call for a reconsideration of the notion of 'causality'. Hornsby argues for a conception of 'causality' that is broader than the orthodox naturalist's strict nomological conception. On Hornsby's notion, X is the cause of Y, iff Y would not have happened or be the case if X had not happened or been the case. On this conception of causation, X can be my intention to speed up the car, or even my lack of attention to the traffic light's turning red. And Y can be a physical impact. Reasons, as well as the mere absence of particular items in the head, can *be* causes.

These distinctions and arguments are inchoate and tentative. But it is here that the real depth and originality in this collection of essays is to be found. The result is a critical view of the *explanans* that is taken for granted by the orthodox naturalist, and used by the normativist as a foil for defining normative relations. Pursuing this line of argument is necessary if we want to avoid the shortcomings of both orthodox naturalist and normativist approaches to key phenomena in contemporary thinking. For anyone with such interests, and for anyone interested in the role that the concept of 'nature' and kindred concepts play in their thinking, this collection will prove to be very instructive.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

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John McDowell

By MAXIMILIAN DE GAYNESFORD

Polity, 2004. xx + 232 pp. £50.00 cloth, £14.99 paper

John McDowell

By TIM THORNTON

Acumen, 2004. vi + 266 pp. £40.00 cloth, £14.95 paper

John McDowell is one of the most influential—and most controversial—philosophers writing today. His papers from the 1970s and 1980s on moral realism, singular thought, rule-following, perception and several other issues

have reshaped significant parts of the philosophical landscape. His John Locke Lectures, published in 1994 as *Mind and World*, gained him a worldwide readership far beyond specialist circles. More than one such reader, however, has complained that McDowell's work is difficult. It isn't hard to see why: McDowell covers an extraordinarily wide range of topics; his prose is dense and often metaphorical; he develops his own position in constant debate with other, equally 'difficult' philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and, among more recent figures, Frege, Wittgenstein, Sellars, and Davidson; and, finally, he somewhat paradoxically thinks of his contributions to philosophy as primarily 'therapeutic', or opening up a way to leave philosophy behind. That an introduction to McDowell's philosophy has been overdue becomes apparent by the fact that two such book-length introductions have now appeared in the same year. Both afford reliable preliminary access to McDowell's thought—though in very different ways.

Tim Thornton offers a detailed survey of McDowell's major writings between 1976 and 2002. In a concise introduction, Thornton presents McDowell as interested primarily in "the reconciliation of reason and nature" (p. 5), a project which, according to Thornton, contains two aspects: One concerns the "philosophy of nature" and consists, first, in overcoming a Cartesian conception of the mind (with its ontological gap between mind and matter, its idea of the mind as an inner space) and, second, in accepting a "post-Kantian account of the world" (which rejects the dualism of conceptual scheme and content in favour of the view that both the world and our experience belong to the "space of reasons," i.e., have a conceptual, fact-like structure) (p. 10). The other aspect concerns the "nature of philosophy" (p. 14), under which rubric Thornton introduces McDowell's rejection of "bald" (i.e., reductionist) naturalism, his therapeutic conception of philosophy, and his entanglement with the philosophical tradition. Already here Thornton shows himself to be a competent and sympathetic, but not uncritical, guide to McDowell's philosophy. In the six chapters that follow, he deals with McDowell's interpretation of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations (Ch. 1), McDowell's moral realism (Ch. 2), his combination of a Davidsonian theory of meaning with a Fregean theory of sense (Ch. 3), his radically externalist, and thus anti-Cartesian, conception of singular thought (Ch. 4), his views on experience and knowledge (Ch. 5) and, finally, the Kantian conception of experience and the Aristotelian conception of (second) nature that figure prominently in *Mind and World* (Ch. 6). In each chapter, due attention is paid to the dialectical context in which McDowell has developed his views, such that the reader learns a great deal not only about McDowell, but also about philosophers such as Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Kripke, Crispin Wright, Davidson, Mackie, Evans, and others. Various objections to McDowell's views are raised—and, after due consideration, largely rejected.

Since Thornton devotes a lot of attention to the earlier papers, *Mind and World* receives comparably little. Additionally, although some central themes (such as the anti-Platonic consequences of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations) surface again and again in different contexts, the inner unity of McDowell's views may not be discernible to the uninitiated reader. Still, the

reader is given a fairly comprehensive picture of both the (many) strengths and the (few) weaknesses of McDowell's philosophy, as well as of the philosophical landscape in which it is located.

Maximilian de Gaynesford begins with a comparison between John McDowell and the early romantic poet-philosopher Novalis (Preface, p. xiii). According to de Gaynesford, both understand philosophy as a quest to find a "home" for man in the natural world. This, being the key question of *Mind and World*, is the main focus of de Gaynesford's book. In the first part, "openness to the world" is introduced as the central notion of McDowell's project (pp. 6ff.), where 'openness' is used as a metaphor for the fact that, in cognition and perception, the world is unproblematically accessible to us. Furthermore, openness is presented as part of what de Gaynesford calls "the Default" (pp. 4ff.), which he defines as our pre-philosophical understanding of how human beings are cognitively related to the world. This default understanding needs no philosophical underpinnings, but need only be defended against the well-known challenges presented by modern philosophical thought.

In the remaining three parts (2–4), de Gaynesford deals with the notoriously difficult and controversial McDowellian conception of 'second' nature. In part II, McDowell's Aristotelian version of naturalism is examined and distinguished from scientific and reductionist naturalism. De Gaynesford offers a lucid presentation of how McDowell finds a place for reason within the (natural) world. McDowell suggests that our rational capacities be considered part of our 'second' nature—i.e., as capacities the acquisition of which, although within the natural range of human possibilities, requires initiation into social practices (pp. 49–74). Part III explains how McDowell conceives of experience as the result of an interplay between receptivity and concept-use. As de Gaynesford rightly stresses, the point of this Kantian conception of experience is not primarily epistemological, but concerns the question of how experience can be of the world at all. De Gaynesford takes the reader on an extensive tour through the complex and Gordian labyrinth of McDowell's arguments. For example, he sheds light on McDowell's conviction that experience must have conceptual content, since otherwise it couldn't play a justificatory role in judgement. De Gaynesford also makes clear how McDowell's thesis of the world-dependency of thought requires a minimal empiricism (pp. 89–98). This analysis is combined with a short but helpful presentation of the basics of Frege's philosophy of language (pp. 121–32). By contrast, Davidson's truth-conditional semantics, despite its significance for McDowell, is not treated at all.

In Part IV the book loses some of its impact. After a helpful survey of Wittgenstein's conception of (behavioural) criteria for mental episodes is presented (pp. 151–57), there follows a surprisingly harsh critique of McDowell's "disjunctive" account of experience according to which veridical experiences on the one hand and illusions, hallucinations etc., on the other fall into two distinct categories of mental states that do not share a common representational content. The disjunctive conception fails to show, de Gaynesford argues, how "when a person has made a fact manifest to him in experience, he is able to tell that this is so" (p. 161). This critique, however, misses the point, since

it presupposes an ‘internalist’ epistemology, requiring that the perceiving person must be able to tell, on the basis of what is immediately available to her in experience, whether she is deceived or not. This neglects the fact that McDowell is committed to externalism not only in the philosophy of mind but also in epistemology, and hence would reject the internalist requirement.

Both books can be recommended without reservation—though they certainly address different readers. Thornton’s book gives a both detailed and broad survey of McDowell’s philosophy. While densely written and not an easy read for beginners and non-professionals, it provides a high-level introduction for graduate students and teachers. Thornton not only provides a systematic approach to McDowell’s work, but also presents the views of numerous philosophers whose work had an impact on McDowell’s thought. One of the greatest merits of the book is its insightful presentation of McDowell’s anti-Cartesian externalism, which is helpful even for experts. De Gaynesford’s book, in contrast, is not so much a book about all of McDowell’s philosophy but primarily concerns the views he develops in his *Mind and World*. This makes room for a more repetitive presentation that is helpful for beginners. The four parts of the book are closely intertwined, allowing re-encounters with McDowell’s basic concepts in different contexts. Although the book does not make explicit all of McDowell’s central ideas and neglects some of his systematic connections with other contemporary philosophers (such as Davidson and Evans), it offers a valuable and readable introduction for undergraduate students of philosophy and for scholars from other fields such as cognitive science, cultural studies, and sociology.

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ETHICS

Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe,

Edited by MARY GEACH and LUKE GORMALLY

St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs

Imprint Academic, 2005. xxi + 298 pp. £35.00

The publication of this collection of essays by the late Elizabeth Anscombe is a significant philosophical event. For while Anscombe, one of the most brilliant students of Wittgenstein and one of his chief literary executors, would have to be regarded as in her own right one of the most distinguished and influential of analytical philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century, this is the first substantial collection of mostly (though not entirely) her later writings to have appeared since the three-volume Blackwell publication of her collected works in 1981. Although many of the papers in this collection have been published previously, most have appeared in fairly out of the way places, and the editors—Anscombe’s son-in-law Professor Luke Gormally and her daughter Mary Geach (as well as Professor John Haldane as the editor of this important new series of St. Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public