

McGinn, Colin, *Consciousness and Its Objects*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 256, GBP 25 (Cloth).

Colin McGinn is best-known for his defence of ‘mysterianism’, one of the most provocative theses on the mind-body problem. Mysterianism is comprised of three claims. The first claim is that there *is* a solution to the problem, that is, that the mind-body problem is a genuine philosophical problem that can be solved in principle. The second claim is that, nevertheless, we human beings are cognitively closed with respect to the solution to the problem. Just as dogs cannot solve mathematical problems, so we cannot solve the mind-body problem. The third claim is that in spite of the human insolubility of the problem, naturalistic monism is true. McGinn defended this position thoroughly in his 1991 book, *The Problem of Consciousness*. Since then, however, the debate on the mind-body problem has flourished dramatically. *Consciousness and Its Object*, which McGinn regards as its sequel, is therefore warmly welcomed.

In Chapter 1 McGinn argues that the very way of our knowing the mind-body problem ironically blocks us from solving it. In Chapter 2 he argues that the solution to the problem must take the form of a conceptually—but not empirically—true identity statement that contains concepts radically different from our current concepts of mind and body. In Chapter 3 he defends mysterianism once again by making the claim that the reality exceeds our grasp even though there is nothing supernatural about it. In Chapter 4 he argues that type-identity materialism is false but that mental properties are not irreducible. In Chapter 5 he explains the mystery of consciousness by appealing to the concept of space. In Chapter 6 he speculates, by referring to ideas in ancient Greek

philosophy, as to how the true theory of consciousness would look. In Chapter 7 McGinn illustrates his position with a science-fiction-style dialogue. In Chapter 8 he discusses the intractability of philosophical problems and the cognitive closure. In Chapter 9 he argues, by appealing to the ‘inverted first-person authority’ case, that mind and matter cannot be defined epistemologically. In Chapter 10 he considers the issue of reference to ordinary physical objects as well as mental entities.

At first sight McGinn’s mysterianism seems extraordinary. This book proves, however, that it constitutes a sophisticated philosophical position that cannot be dismissed too quickly.

*Yujin Nagasawa, University of Birmingham and Australian National University*