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BOOK NOTES

Mellor, D. H., *Probability: A Philosophical Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. xi + 152, US\$96.95 (cloth), US\$29.95 (paper).

Mellor has written an illuminating introduction to an area of philosophy for which there is a genuine paucity of good entry-level texts.

The book begins by distinguishing what Mellor takes to be the three fundamental kinds of probability—physical, subjective, and epistemic. Much of the rest of the book is dedicated to determining the extent to which these kinds of probability can be accounted for by the traditional theories of probability. Thus the next five chapters deal primarily with the classical theory, the frequency theory, the propensity theory, the subjective theory, and the logical theory of probability respectively. Mellor traces a number of threads through each of these approaches. For example, he presents the classical theory (Chapter 2) as the idea that probability is a measure of possibility; the frequency theory (Chapter 3) as an extension of the Humean account of necessity as constant conjunction to an account of probability as a measure of frequency of conjunction; and, in Chapter 4, he entertains a view of probability as a measure of physical possibilities that are intrinsic properties of individual worlds. All of these give way to Mellor's preferred account of physical probability—a propensity view identifying probabilities with dispositions to produce limiting frequencies.

After a brief discussion of subjective probability (Chapter 5) including helpful sections on degrees of belief, dutch books, and decision theory, Mellor turns to epistemic probability. In Chapter 6, he considers, and rejects, the logical approach to confirmation, and in Chapter 7 he explains how the subjective approach, together with the rule of updating degrees of belief via conditionalization, can more adequately explain confirmation and epistemic probability. Chapters 8 and 9 explore a number of challenges to this approach, including interesting discussions of how both prior degrees of belief and the conditionalizing rule might be justified. Finally, in Chapter 10, Mellor considers the extent to which the subjective view might be extended to explain away physical probability, but concludes that facts about actual frequencies can only be explained by appeal to propensities.

While the book is deliberately light on mathematics, it nonetheless gives rigorous explanations of the fundamental issues in the philosophy of probability, and insightfully connects them to issues in the theory of evidence, causation, modality, and the theory of action. I strongly recommend it as a text for undergraduate philosophy courses on probability. For more advanced readers, Mellor provides an opinionated, engaging overview of a deeply important philosophical topic.

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Christensen, David, *Putting Logic in its Place: Formal Constraints on Rational Belief*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, pp. 187, AU\$92.95 (cloth).

As he explains in the first chapter, the ‘rationality’ with which Christensen is concerned is epistemic rather than pragmatic, applies to sets of beliefs rather than to changes of belief, and is global rather than local. It would seem to be self-evidently desirable that the standards of such a rationality should somehow refer to the rules of logic—these are our laws of thought after all—but philosophers have been happy to demonstrate that there is no easy way to make the connection. In the second chapter he shows how the types of constraints that logic is supposed to place on beliefs depend on the view that one has of beliefs. An all-or-nothing, binary view lends itself to direct constraint by the requirements of logical consistency and deductive closure (cogency), whereas a view that allows for degrees of belief is usually associated with constraints derived from probability theory (coherence). These latter constraints, he argues, are in fact a method of indirectly constraining belief sets by logic.

Chapters Three and Four attack the plausibility of the concept of binary belief. To begin with, the ‘Preface’ and ‘Lottery’ paradoxes, which are clearly explained here, are used to show that when binary beliefs are made subject to deductive cogency the result is that highly implausible beliefs have to be held. In fact cogency is shown to lead in these cases to belief sets that we would judge to be highly irrational. Moreover, it is shown that the purposes for which binary belief is supposed to be important—such as explaining the effectiveness of arguments—can be achieved using graded beliefs and probabilistic constraints. Finally, it is claimed that whatever advantages there may be to a binary view of beliefs, such a view does not seem to help much in trying to understand what is required for rationality.

Chapter Five takes up the defence of the alternative view, but is unusual in that it strongly contests the identification of degrees of belief with measures of preference. To define beliefs in that way, it is argued, makes a hash of the metaphysics of belief. This rejection of the preference view has consequences for the arguments that are used to support probabilistically derived constraints on beliefs. The Dutch Book Argument and the Representation Theorem (which are used but not fully described here) depend for their effectiveness upon there being just such a relationship between preferences and beliefs as Christensen rejects. The main thrust of this chapter is to argue that there is a much more plausible relationship between preferences and beliefs that is still sufficient for the DBA and RT to support the desired conclusions.

Chapter Six, though not at all irrelevant, is to a large degree independent of the rest of the book. It provides a general overview of the role of idealized models of rationality and answers some criticisms to which they’ve been subjected.

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McGinn, Colin, *Consciousness and Its Objects*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, pp. 256, £29 (cloth).

Colin McGinn is best-known for his defence of ‘mysterianism’, one of the most provocative theses on the mind-body problem. Mysterianism consists of three claims.

The first claim is that there *is* a solution to the problem. That is, the mind-body problem is a genuine philosophical problem, which 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 like dogs cannot solve mathematical problems we cannot solve the mind-body problem. The third claim is that in spite of human beings' 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 ironically the very way of our knowing the mind-body problem 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 which contains concepts that are 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, how the true theory of consciousness would look like. 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 is indeed a sophisticated philosophical position which should not be dismissed too quickly.

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Carruthers, Peter, *Consciousness: Essays from a Higher-Order Perspective*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. x + 247, £45.

The subtitle of this book, *Essays from a Higher-Order Perspective*, does something its contents avoid, namely sacrifice accuracy for elegance. The papers contained in the collection (all previously published) do not have the literary pretensions implied by 'essays' and they do not, with exceptions, assume the truth of the Higher-Order 'perspective'. They are not so much *from* that perspective as *in defence* of it. Indeed quite often the discussion turns to a defence of Carruthers's favourite higher-order theory as against *other* higher-order theories. However, the sort of word play employed in the subtitle does not infect the rest of the book, which is full of tightly argued papers on an important topic in contemporary philosophy of mind.

The first paper in the collection defends a particular view of reduction ('explanatory' reduction) that promises to allow for reductive accounts of

consciousness in the face of the notorious explanatory gap. The subsequent four chapters discuss and defend Carruthers's own reductive account directly, which he used to call the Dispositional Higher-Order Thought theory but now calls the Dual (analog) Content Theory. The shift in nomenclature is brought about by a shift in emphasis, which will be interesting for those steeped in the discipline. The basic idea of this theory is that phenomenal consciousness is brought about by the availability of a certain sort of intentional state (one which, *inter alia*, is directed towards states with perceptual contents) for use by specialized higher-order cognitive processes.

The final four chapters deal with the issue of animal consciousness. This is of special interest to Carruthers because it is a consequence of his theory that non-human animals are not phenomenally conscious. This consequence ought to mean the demise of the theory, but Carruthers does a fair job of making it look not so disastrous a consequence as it might otherwise seem. One of his strategies is to emphasize the significance of *non-phenomenal* consciousness (something like access consciousness). Those independently interested in the issue of animal consciousness may find these chapters of interest, though the context is impossible to ignore.

Overall, the book contains a lot of densely packed argument, most of which is very solid. One feels that Carruthers gives about as good a defence of his theory as could be given, and certainly enough to keep it on the table given the state of the field. Most of the chapters are unchanged from their originally published state and so there is a lot of repetition (the book is not meant to be read from start to finish). The publication of this collection in preference to original works probably demonstrates an excess of timidity on the part of Oxford University Press, but those working on the nitty-gritty of philosophical accounts of consciousness will find this a useful companion to Carruthers's earlier book, *Phenomenal Consciousness*.

John O'Dea
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Burge, Tyler, *Truth, Thought, Reason: Essays on Frege*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. xii + 419, £60 (cloth).

This excellent collection of essays spans some 25 years of work by Tyler Burge on central aspects of Frege's philosophy—Frege's concern with 'meaning' and knowledge, the methodology underlying his investigation of these themes, and the powerful intellectual perspective that stands behind this work. The book has three main parts. Part I, which contains such papers as 'Frege on Truth' and the early 'Frege and the Hierarchy', looks at Frege's investigation of the structure of language and thought, and the integral place that the notion of truth occupies in his account of this structure. Part II, which has as lead paper Burge's influential 'Sinning Against Frege', deals with the notion of sense as both (a component of) thought and idealized cognitive value. Part III, containing such papers as 'Frege on Knowing the Foundations', is concerned with Frege's rationalist conception of knowledge, and examines Frege's account of a priority, self-evidence, and our knowledge of the primitive truths of thought. A number of the papers are supplemented with useful 'Postscripts', and there is an excellent introduction. Burge reminds us that the resulting revisionary account of Frege's intentions undermines a number of seminal criticisms of Frege's work (Dummett's criticism of Frege on truth, for example, and

Kripke's dismissal of Frege on proper names). But Burge is not simply concerned to set the historical record straight. These essays articulate Frege's vision in a way that makes much of it seem extremely compelling, even though Burge thinks that there are important areas where subsequent work (including his own) has shown Frege to have been wrong.

The essays in this work are uniformly thought-provoking, and among the very best interpretative articles on this important philosopher. Given lack of space, I might mention just one small criticism I have of Burge's otherwise compelling presentation. In the course of discussing Frege's view of the apparent unclarity of many mathematical expressions ('Frege on Sense and Linguistic Meaning'), Burge argues that Frege had a conception of fully determinate senses or thoughts that are completely independent for their representational properties of human practice or understanding. Burge takes this to show how different Frege's notion of sense is from standard notions of linguistic meaning. But his claims on behalf of such a notion are in tension with his well-known view that Frege is wrong about the denotation-fixing potential of senses of proper names, and that a theory of what fixes the denotation of a name has to be appropriately externalist. For if senses can be representationally independent of human practice, it is hard to see why the senses of proper names cannot embody something like the *right* theory of denotation-fixing for names (a causal theory of reference, say). Such a theory would in some sense be implicitly known to users of proper names, but its details would nonetheless only be apparent after much philosophical reflection. What would have prevented Frege from admitting as much?

But this is not to challenge Burge's larger interpretative story, which strikes me as offering an utterly convincing portrayal of the philosophical genius behind Frege's work on 'meaning', knowledge, language, and thought. This book of essays is, quite simply, compulsory reading for anyone seriously interested in this astounding philosopher—the fountainhead', to use Burge's description, 'of mainstream philosophy in the twentieth century'.

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Braybrooke, David, *Utilitarianism: Restorations; Repairs; Renovations*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, pp. 212, US\$55.

This book collects, in a somewhat modified form, papers on utilitarianism that Braybrooke published over a 35 year period, beginning in 1963. It is organized around a series of questions that critics often pose to the utilitarian. 'Does utilitarianism undermine adherence to moral rules?' [11] Does it require agents to have complete and infallible knowledge about the consequences of their actions? 'Does utilitarianism ever endorse sacrificing someone's life to make other people happy?' [80] Does it require sacrificing most, or even much, of the happiness of some in order to benefit others? Is the notion of utility insufficiently specific or quantifiable to be of use in guiding action?

Braybrooke's answers to these questions are unlikely to satisfy most critics of utilitarianism. Most of them depend upon the claim that cases in which one might answer 'Yes' to any of the above are so removed from the real world as to pose no

serious problem for utilitarianism. This is especially true, he argues, if utilitarianism is understood, first and foremost, as a normative theory for the development of social policies rather than as an ethical theory for guiding personal action.

In response to the first question, Braybrooke observes, most contexts require agents to coordinate their actions with others and the demands of such coordination, coupled with our imperfect knowledge regarding the behaviour of those affected by our actions, ordinarily requires adherence to rules. In response to the second, he argues that our ability to revise social policies and to compensate for the effects of past choices allow even fallible agents to be good utilitarians. Regarding the third, he claims, Benthamite utilitarianism precludes the sacrifice of one person's life for others' gain, because policies that increase aggregate utility by removing members of the group fail to allow for an accurate comparison of the utility of two possible states of affairs. In reply to the fourth, he insists that a significant decrease in the happiness of one person seldom leads to an offsetting increase in the happiness of others, and such sacrifices can be avoided if policy makers are committed to continuously revising policies in order to 'increase the proportion of the population that are happy' [119]. Finally, if we focus utility calculations on meeting needs and developing capabilities, Braybrooke argues, we can make utility sufficiently quantifiable to provide concrete guidance to policy-making.

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Crowder, George, *Isaiah Berlin: Liberty and Pluralism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004, pp. x + 229, US\$27.

Crowder aims to introduce and defend Berlin's political ideas, in particular the case for liberalism against totalitarianism. That case turns upon a monism/pluralism distinction. Monism, the view that all values fit together in a single coherent system, motivates totalitarianism since the monist goal justifies the use of oppression. But monism, said Berlin, is false. Instead there exist many values, often conflicting and incommensurable. Hence liberalism but not totalitarianism recognizes the truth of pluralism.

The dangers of monism runs through much of Berlin's work and Crowder's exegesis is notable for its breadth of coverage. Almost all of Berlin's work is covered, not just the more explicitly political works, starting with his 1939 book *Karl Marx*, through to the many posthumously published works. This results in interesting discussions on topics as varied as logical positivism, Tolstoy and other nineteenth century Russian authors, historical determinism, the origins and perseverance of nationalism, and Berlin's views on 'the Jewish question' and his own Jewish identity.

Berlin's most famous work is 'Two Concepts of Liberty' and the chapter on it is a highlight. In contrast with negative liberty, which is the absence of external obstacles, positive liberty is the ideal of personal autonomy which requires the removal of internal obstacles. This distinction, explains Crowder, is not to be confused with (and nor did Berlin confuse) the distinction between formal and effective freedom, or the unclear distinction of 'freedom from' and 'freedom to.' Nor is positive liberty to be confused with political participation and nor is the distinction intended to be exhaustive of all the senses of freedom. Berlin argued that positive liberty was

susceptible to being twisted in order to justify oppression but Crowder concludes that while we ought to be wary of positive conceptions, Berlin undervalued positive liberty.

The other highlight is the two chapters near the end on pluralism and monism. Monism does not necessarily imply totalitarianism but Crowder's explanation of Berlin's view that it strongly tends that way is convincing. Not much is said in support of pluralism being true and one wonders whether monism is unfairly represented by being associated with a handful of implausible monist views. Instead, the focus is on whether pluralism supports liberalism. The best argument offered by Berlin, says Crowder, was that pluralism implies the impossibility of achieving all values and hence political arrangements are needed that acknowledge this impossibility. Crowder points out that while liberalism does this, so might other arrangements such as conservatism. So in the following chapter, Crowder offers further argument from pluralism to liberalism. The best of these is an appeal to diversity: if pluralism is true then arrangements which allow more values rather than fewer are preferable, and liberalism is best at this. The argument is sketchy (Crowder says more elsewhere) and faces the objection that even if liberalism allows more goods, it might also allow more 'bads' than alternative systems.

Crowder then argues that the type of liberalism that follows from his arguments is one that is based on autonomy rather than toleration. In the final chapter he suggests how such a liberalism can be extended to support the redistribution of wealth and some degree of cultural rights. While these conclusions follow validly, many may question the premise. Doesn't pluralism mean that autonomy does not have privileged status over other goods? Berlin's preference for negative liberty over positive would seem to support toleration over autonomy. While Crowder claims to be developing Berlin's own ideas, Berlinians may think the departure too great.

An informative and thought-provoking study of Berlin's ideas.

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