

The Nature of True Minds. John Heil. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 248 pages, \$49.95 hard, \$17.95 soft.

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Though the title of this book is a bit ambitious, its content does indeed grapple with one of the most difficult post-Cartesian problems of the philosophy of mind. It seeks to address the mind–body problem, employing the logic and language of the supervenience theory, while at the same time preserving a notion of intentionality that is not necessarily reducible (I think) to neurophysiological accounts of human behavior or activity. The presentation of the argument is careful, systematic and disciplined, though it may prove to be challenging reading for those unaccustomed to its analytical style of argumentation and less accessible to those who are unfamiliar with modal logic in general and with the growing “supervenience hypothesis” literature in particular.

The writings of Donald Davidson, Jaegwon Kim and John Searle, serve as the primary sources and the backdrop upon which Heil advances his arguments. Local arguments common to cognitive science, artificial intelligence and philosophy of mind — such as determinism, causation, representation, consciousness and epistemology — are taken up where they have relevance or application to supervenience or intentionality in general. In short, Heil seeks to defend, though not explain, intentionality in the face of externalist challenges.

The introductory chapter is largely definitional. There are brief discussions on agency and how images of science have informed and transformed our common sense understanding of the concept, naturalism’s relationship to the philosophy of mind, eliminativism’s (which Heil brackets in his analysis) opposition to intentionality, while the final section of this chapter outlines and defines several other relevant terms. Curiously, Heil sees the conception of agency as having “. . . on the whole, been taken over into psychology, where it underlies our most rigorous attempts to understand ourselves qua intelligent beings” (p. 1). Even though Heil sees himself as a philosopher thinking and writing about a concept that has largely been the domain of psychology, as a psychologist, I see little evidence, unfortunately, that agency has played a significant role, theoretically and certainly empirically, in mainstream psychology. There are of course notable exceptions (e.g., James, 1890/1983; Rychlak, 1988; Wescott, 1988), and I have recently observed a growing, though generally still reticent, interest in seriously addressing agency (e.g., Howard and Conway, 1986; Lewis, 1990 and response papers; Williams, 1992).

Strong statements in this chapter such as "Psychological explanations of behavior differ from physiological or biological accounts in appealing to intentional characteristics of agents To turn one's back on such characteristics is, it seems, to turn ones back on psychology" (p. 4) are, on my view, exactly correct but almost universally unacknowledged or flatly denied in psychology if "differ" in this statement implies a non-mechanistic explanation. I think for the most part both psychological theorizing and research either explicitly rejects, implicitly assumes or tenaciously ignores agentive or teleological issues while attempting to explain and understand human beings. At the moment it appears that intentionality and the broader concept of agency have been given token status in psychology or cognitive science as a kind of quaint folk psychology, being a useful and sometimes necessary illusion to get along in everyday life. My experience is that philosophers like Heil are much more willing and interested in genuine discussions and analyses of the "messy" concept of agency than are psychologists. I applaud Heil's significant contribution to intentional or agentive literature.

In the second chapter, some time is spent discussing how the Cartesian split of mind and body, of the inner and the outer, provided the context for the later internalist vs. externalist dilemma. Heil finds externalist critiques, articulated by twentieth century philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Putnam, and Burge, compelling and that any defense of intentionality must deal with this particular understanding of the mind. Indeed, this seems to be the crux of the matter for Heil: any justification for intentionality must be willing to accept the position that intrinsic states or contents of the mind are not independent of extrinsic "forms of life" [Wittgenstein], "speaker's environments" [Putnam] or "social environments" [Burge]. (Putnam's and Burge's "environment" should not be confused with the Behaviorist S-R "environment," the former not necessarily embracing a mechanistic, efficient causal explanation.) Another critical question that Heil explores is the relationship between biology and mind. After presenting careful analysis and argument, Heil concludes, if I understand him, that externalist/biological descriptions do not entirely account for the existence of thoughts, beliefs and desires and their manifestations in behavior.

The core of this book belongs to chapter three in which Heil sets forth the supervenience hypothesis which "provides a powerful and natural way of fitting together elements of our overall picture of intelligent agency" (p. 61). He sees "the prospect of supervenience," however, "not as providing a solution to the traditional mind-body problem, but as affording a framework within which it may be possible to sharpen our appreciation of what that problem encompasses" (p. 14). Heil believes this to be the case, I think, because the supervenience hypothesis allows, to give the simplest example, α (the mental) to supervene on β (the physical) in a determined and dependent sense without compromising α or β 's ontological autonomy. If this is the case, then supervenience, indeed, cannot "solve" the problem of Cartesian dualism; it can only "sharpen" or reallocate the properties of the mental and/or the physical and leave the relationship between the two a mystery. This I think is why Heil must leave the question of reduction to empirical efforts (p. 62) or regard the problem of causal reduction (not of properties) as essentially a non-issue (p. 83). Be that as it may, this chapter provides an excellent discussion, detailed and lucid, of "strong," "weak" and "global" supervenience, comparing and contrasting the logical consequences of each.

The following three chapters examine causation, the notion of privileged access to our own thoughts, and language. After looking at different approaches to mental

causation, including Searle's, Heil locates the "causal authority of intentional mental characteristics in the physical — neurological, or biological, or quantum mechanical — conditions that realise mental characteristics." "Externalism," he continues, "can be accommodated by allowing that the physical condition in question realise mental characteristics partly in virtue of their situations, and the causal histories of the agents to whom they belong" (p. 146). How one is to understand Heil's causal model depends on what he means by "causal authority," "causal histories," and in particular the word "realise." One reading would suggest that intentions are the effect of the interaction of biological and environmental causes in which case nothing remotely new is being advanced. The interaction of biological and environmental causes is by now the orthodox position of contemporary psychological explanation (e.g., Kimble, 1989). Another reading will note that Heil is careful to avoid the mechanistic language inherent in biological and environmental explanations. Perhaps Heil wants to say that neurobiology, situations and causal histories are instrumental to intentionality but not necessarily the ontological cause of intentions. This latter reading, while not without its problems, seems to allow for intentions as they are commonly understood. With either reading, however, one is still left with an insoluble dualism.

Discussions of privileged access to one's own thoughts and the relationship between language and thought, found in the latter chapters, are important to Heil's defense of intentionality but only marginally related to the supervenience hypothesis as I view it. Those who follow the current cognitive science discourse on theories of language, representation, consciousness and self-reflexivity will find Heil's contribution insightful, clarifying and challenging. In the end, Heil argues that while he has not attempted to set forth a full blown theory of intentionality, there is, as of yet, no good reason, philosophical or empirical, to rule out intentional theorizing and explanation.

Heil touches on many other critical issues concerning intentionality including truth, morality, objectively shared worlds, interpretation and the like. In this sense, the book is comprehensive though the details of these issues become sketchy and their relationship to the supervenience hypothesis less clear. Heil's insistence that he is only defending and not explaining intentionality is, I believe, an impossibility. Any defense of or apologetic for a concept or position must necessarily include an explication of that concept or position, otherwise arguments cannot be constructed. This is where I run into some difficulty with Heil's intentionality. Typical though problematic words such as "states" of mind; intentional "attitudes," "characteristics," "categories," or "representations;" "contents" (first or second order), "properties," or "capacities" of the mind; are employed to demarcate what is intentional (or at least mental) from that which is not. Since the existence of such states or contents are never themselves explained, only that they supervene on or are realized by the physical, they do little to further our understanding of intentionality and, in an important sense, obfuscate any argument on its behalf.

One risk in talking about intentionality or mentation in this manner is of course that we tend to reify and objectify mental or psychological states, contents or capacities, giving them a more fundamental ontological status and meaning than we do to the intentional phenomena (in this case) themselves and thus engage in a kind of psychologism. As Williams (1990) has put it, "Questions of the meaning of human actions are deferred and recast as questions regarding the categories and qualities of things," thus begging the question of the meaning of human actions (including intentional actions) qua human actions (p. 147). What's more, Heil

seems to be satisfied with the argument that if one can demonstrate that there is no logical, epistemological or empirical reason to eliminate the existence of supervening mental contents than the existence of intentionality is assured. But the mere presents of mental contents or "states," even if they are in some sense independent from neurophysiological properties, does not necessarily include the existence of genuine intentional acts as they are commonly understood in our everyday lives. As I see it, a more meaningful test for the existence of genuine intentional acts is not whether intelligent beings have authentic mental contents, but whether the intentional acts of intelligent beings are manifestations of genuine possibility and not mere necessity (see Williams, 1987, 1992). Possibility, not contents, is the crucial criterion for genuine intentional acts. This approach is similar to Rychlak's (1991) dialectically reasoning human being who is ". . . always — from the birth of cognition — affirming a course of predicated behavior that could have gone in opposition to the course it actually took" (p. 104). Intentional acts of love, hate, charity or violence are understood as intentional, and thus meaningful, because they are not born out of mere biological or environmental necessity.

Nevertheless, the main strength of *The Nature of True Minds* is in its distillation and evaluation of the discourse surrounding the supervenience hypothesis and its application to intentionality. This book deserves careful consideration by those interested in intentional or agentive approaches to human activity and by those who wish these approaches would fall by the wayside.

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