

Book Reviews

Sara Heinämaa, Vili Lähteenmäki, and Pauliina Remes, editors. *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy*. Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind, 4. Dordrecht: Springer 2007. Pp. xii + 366. Cloth, \$199.00.

Anthologies themselves rarely advance substantive theses, but according to its editors, this wide-ranging collection “*argues* that, even though our predecessors did not formulate their philosophical queries in terms of consciousness, they have much to offer to our current disputes concerning its central features,” and “*demonstrates* that consciousness is not just an issue in the philosophy of mind, but is bound to ontology, epistemology, and moral theory” (1; emphasis added). While some of the fourteen papers included here bear out these aims better than others, it must be admitted that their cumulative effect makes for a pretty convincing case.

In their substantial introduction, the editors begin by articulating the volume’s guiding methodology. The concept of consciousness, they write, is neither “diachronically fixed [nor] synchronically clear-cut,” and yet “the diversity of terms and multiplicity of usages should not be taken to imply that the concept is useless or merely a transient cultural formation” (5–6). Consequently, we must “reach beyond the terms to what they name,” and the phenomena named include “phenomenality, aboutness, reflexivity, reflection, unconsciousness, attention, selfhood, ownness, subjectivity and objectivity, and synchronic and diachronic unity” (ibid.). Following an etymological discussion of the word ‘consciousness’—while being the first to use the English term in a technical philosophical sense, Ralph Cudworth seems to have appropriated the Greek ‘*sunaisthēsis*’ from Plotinus—the remainder of the introduction offers a thematic overview of the volume’s contents in terms of the three most prominent aspects of conscious experience: intentionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity (10).

Given this set-up—a topical introduction to a volume whose *raison d’être* is to illuminate contemporary discussions of the problems of consciousness—it is puzzling to find the papers themselves organized not thematically, but chronologically. Part one, “Ancient and Arabic Philosophy,” includes contributions from Amber Carpenter (“On Plato’s Lack of Consciousness”), Juha Sihvola (“The Problem of Consciousness in Aristotle’s Psychology”), Pauliina Remes (“Ownness of Conscious Experience in Ancient Philosophy”), and Jari Kaukua and Taneli Kukkonen (“Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness: Before and After Avicenna”). Part two, “Medieval Philosophy and Early Modern Thought,” consists of articles by Joël Biard (“Intention and Presence: The Notion of *Presentialitas* in the Fourteenth Century”), Mikko Yrjönsuuri (“The Structure of Self-Consciousness: A Fourteenth-Century Debate”), Deborah Brown (“Augustine and Descartes on the Function of Attention in Perceptual Awareness”), Vili Lähteenmäki (“Orders of Consciousness and Forms of Reflexivity in Descartes”), and Jon Miller (“The Status of Consciousness in Spinoza’s Concept of Mind”). The third and final part, “From Kant to Contemporary Discussions,” features the work of Kenneth Westphal (“Human Consciousness and its Transcendental Conditions: Kant’s Anti-Cartesian Revolt”), Susanna Lindberg (“The Living Consciousness of the German Idealists”), Dan Zahavi (“The Heidelberg School and the Limits of Reflection”), Neil Manson (“Contemporary Naturalism and the Concept of Consciousness”), and Sara Heinämaa (“Selfhood, Consciousness, and Embodiment: A Husserlian Approach”). The volume concludes with a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, as well as name and subject indices.

As will be apparent from the titles listed above, the contributions to this volume vary considerably in scope, with some focused on single figures, others concerned with pairs and groups of figures, and still others taking on whole periods and schools. While the scholarship in all cases is impeccable, on the whole, I found this last group of contributions the most philosophically stimulating. At least in part, this is because several of the articles dedicated to single figures emphasize what *divides* their subjects from contemporary concerns. Carpenter, for instance, concludes that Plato's commitment to the soul "creates a great barrier for us in adopting" his lessons on the nature of perception (48). And Miller defends the view that "Spinoza lacked robust views on the nature of consciousness and its relationship to mind" (219). By contrast, for example, Remes' masterly survey of ancient conceptions of "ownness" (i.e., of what makes one's experiences one's own) not only contributes to the scholarly debate over whether the modern notion of subjectivity is to be found in ancient philosophy, but also offers to the contemporary debate a broadly ancient conception that, while acknowledging the subject's privileged access to her own mental states, places far greater emphasis on the objective, shared, and communicable contents of experience. A further example in this vein is Brown's comparison of Augustine's and Descartes's surprisingly naturalistic accounts of attention in perceptual awareness.

Yet another type of highlight is to be found in the discussions of neglected figures. Participants in current debates over consciousness will find much of interest in the accounts of intentionality and mode of presentation advanced by Peter Aureoli and Peter of Ailly (Biard), in the debate between William Ockham and Walter Chatton over self-awareness (Yrjönsuuri), and in the objections to the higher-order theory of consciousness raised by Dieter Henrich (Zahavi).

Let me add that, unlike some others in this series, this volume is relatively free of stylistic infelicities and typographical errors. (A remarkable exception is to be found on the frontispiece, which misidentifies the book's volume number.) Unfortunately, however, the volume shares with its series-mates their exorbitant price: at two bills, this is unlikely to be a volume found on the shelves of many individual scholars. Given the fine work found between its covers, that is a shame indeed.

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David Sedley. *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity*. Sather Classical Lectures, 66. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2007. Pp. xvii + 269. Cloth, \$29.95.

The history of evolutionary theory is a little bit of a puzzle. Charles Darwin, the author of the *Origin of Species* in 1859, was the man who made evolutionary ideas reasonable—ideas that were generally accepted—and it was Darwin who provided the major mechanism of natural selection. He was not the first evolutionist, however. For at least one hundred and fifty years, starting with people like the French encyclopediast Denis Diderot, people had been speculating that organisms (including humans) had a natural origin, from primitive forms. But why did these speculations have to wait this long? It is true that Christianity, incorporating as it did the creation stories of Genesis—what the nineteenth-century English essayist Thomas Carlyle called "Jewish old clothes"—was not going to be friendly towards evolution. But what about the Greeks? Did not they get into such ideas?

As a matter of fact we all know that they did, a bit. Empedocles had some fanciful ideas about pieces coming together to make functioning organisms, but these were ideas for which he was roundly scolded by Aristotle. Why? Ernst Mayr, the distinguished, twentieth-century evolutionist, used to argue that Plato was the culprit. (Mayr was good at making moral judgments.) Supposedly, the theory of forms precluded any sort of developmentalism. Jellyfish are jellyfish and cows are cows and humans are humans, and that is an end to it. But many have long suspected that Mayr is probably not entirely (or perhaps even partially) right. Apart from anything else, many nineteenth-century evolutionists (and