Norton Nelkin
Consciousness and the Origins of Thought.
New York: Cambridge University Press 1996.
Pp. xv + 341.
US$59.95. ISBN 0-521-56409-3.

Norton Nelkin's posthumously published *Consciousness and the origins of thought* defends a rationalist and internalist theory of mind. It's *rationalist* in that it emphasizes the cognitive/propositional over the phenomenal, and the active over the receptive: specifically, Nelkin works hard to downplay the passive experience of phenomenal states, not only as *the* epistemological foundation for human knowledge, but even as being central to sense perception or (more startlingly) pain. It's *internalist* because, for Nelkin, there being an external world is not conceptually necessary for the existence of mental content: that is, his semantics is solipsistic in principle, even though he eschews scepticism in practice. Additionally, he insists that our first epistemic access is to the contents of our own minds. Here too, then, the view is internalist. Nelkin gives his avowedly Descartes-inspired picture a non-Cartesian twist, however: his is a *materialistic* rationalism, which freely employs clinical cases, and other empirical research. The overall result — combining Cartesian rationalism/internalism with contemporary scientific methodology and materialism — is what Nelkin calls *Scientific Cartesianism*.

To get the general feel of the book, consider two examples of Nelkin's severe anti-phenomenalism. Example one: he argues that a sense datum is *visual* not because of its 'raw feel', but because the resulting perceptual judgment derives from stimulations of the eye. He writes: 'The senses are best defined by processes that end with judgment-types and begin with organ stimulations...' (30). That is why, to mention just one of his many arguments, non-humans might be able to *see*, without having even quasi-human visual phenomenology. Therefore, concludes Nelkin, judgment isn't (*pace* Empiricism) just a 'sequel' to perception; instead, judgment (rather than qualia) is the very heart of perception. Second anti-phenomenalist example. Nelkin contends that even the nature of *pain* has little to do with the associated pain-feeling: pain, says Nelkin, is not the same as pain-phenomena (62). Here is but one reason. While pain may form a natural kind, pain-phenomena likely do not: paying attention only to their associated sensations, it's far from clear that, e.g., headaches and pin-pricks belong together, in a single kind, while nausea falls outside this kind. Conclusion: what headaches and pin-pricks share, qua pains, is something functional/cognitive, not something phenomenal. Nelkin doesn't deny that visual or pain phenomena exist, of course. Indeed, they are among the causes of perceptual and pain judgments. But, to adopt Wittgenstein's metaphor, they are but a beetle-in-a-box, incapable of *constituting* the agent's mental state.

Why does any of this matter? Though Nelkin doesn't dwell on it, his work dovetails nicely with attempts to capture everything *essential* about the mental in terms of cognitive, intentional, propositional states. Passive experience of phenomena does exist, but it is not the essence of mentality: not even of consciousness, sensation, *et al.* The book therefore nicely complements work by, for example, Daniel Dennett and Michael Tye. (Indeed, I expect that one's taste for Dennett's *Consciousness Explained* would well predict one's reaction to Nelkin's book. If you loved *CE*, you'll love this. On the other hand, if you hated *CE*...)

Nelkin provides a wealth of arguments — many of them wholly unfamiliar, at least to me — for his surprising conclusions. So, on the positive side, readers will learn a great deal from the book, of substantial interest. Moreover, when Nelkin's conclusions are tentative, and his arguments speculative, he openly admits this. But these are not unequivocal virtues. To begin with, the discussions are frequently overly conjectural. Moreover, Nelkin often 'lays it on too thick', introducing so many cases, thought experiments, and other evidence that the flow of argument is obscured. This isn't unrelated to the book's origins: because it grew out of a series of earlier publications, the text exhibits an inevitable disjointedness, and a quirky choice of emphasis.

I have other concerns as well. First, there are two very surprising omissions in Nelkin's discussion of Scientific Cartesianism. Omission number one: in defending internalism, the only view he rebuts is Dennettian instrumentalism! He mentions Burge-Putnam cases exactly once, dismissing them as 'mere intuition pumps' (250). Omission number two: though he defends internalism, individualism, nativism, mental realism, and scientific naturalism about the mind, Nelkin never once mentions Chomsky, his most obvious ally. My second concern is that Nelkin's discussion of opposing views is sometimes quite eccentric. To take one example, in Chapter 8 Nelkin says that 'according to Instrumentalists, no propositional-attitude states actually exist' (195). Things are actually more tricky, of course: instrumentalists often maintain that mental states are real enough (i.e., they're not like goblins and unicorns), although their 'reality' consists in nothing more than the predictive-explanatory power of certain theories. It's not that Nelkin gets instrumentalists wrong, exactly. It's just that the unwary may be misled by his idiosyncratic presentation. Finally, the book would have greatly benefitted from a more substantial methodological preamble, clarifying issues like: Why are merely imaginable cases relevant to Nelkin's purportedly proto-scientific project? (That he takes them to be relevant is clear. He writes, about commissurotomy, hemianopia and other patients: '... it is at least empirically and *theoretically* possible that these are cases of perception without phenomena, *and only the possibility is needed to make my point*' (57: my emphasis).) And what exactly is the subject matter here — certain states/events/processes; or certain 'concepts'; or the meaning/use of certain words? (For example, in Chapter 2 it was quite unclear whether anti-phenomenalist conclusions were being drawn about the colour red, the concept RED, or the meaning/use of the word 'red'. Serious treatment of meta-philosophical preliminaries might have cleared this up.)

One final, and quite striking, peculiarity. The book is divided into three parts, one of which is called 'consciousness'. Moreover, this word appears in the book's title. And yet the actual discussion of consciousness seems essentially otiose: it could be skipped without significant loss. Nor, to my mind, was 'the origin of thought' a central theme. Of course, there's a good chance I'm missing something. But to me 'Scientific Cartesianism' seems a much more apt designation for this volume.

In sum, the book addresses many novel questions in imaginative and striking ways. Unfortunately, it is somewhat fractured, overly speculative, and suffers from lamentable omissions and exegetical quirks. My overall assessment, then, is that one might better read the individual articles upon which the book is based. Whatever its weaknesses, however, the book makes clear that, with Nelkin's untimely death, the discipline lost a promising and gifted philosopher.

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Patrick Riley
Leibniz's Universal Jurisprudence. Justice as the Charity of the Wise.
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Any book on Leibniz is a daunting endeavor, for Leibniz himself wrote so few. Only the *Theodicy* (1710) appeared during his lifetime, and it is a mess — the outcome of many years of conversation and reflection finally cobbled together between two covers. While not bad as philosophy, it leaves much to be desired as a book. The *New Essays*, essentially a commentary on Locke's *Essay*, borrowed its organizational principle from that work but was graciously withheld from publication upon Locke's death in 1704. The rest of Leibniz's still unfathomed opus consists mainly of drafts, sketches, outlines, 'essays', letters, and a seemingly infinite number of learned snippets, some quite elegant and finished, to be sure, but most penned on the run to yet another idea or project.

Leibniz's baroque mind took its monadic role seriously in trying to reflect everything. Yet the project failed, predictably, on account of both his essential and accidental limitations. Like the differently intentioned Andrew Marvell (1650), Leibniz had neither 'world enough' nor time. This was partly because of the sheer extent and depth of his diverse inquiries, but also because of his inability to focus for long on only one or a few things. The problem is painfully evident in his history of the House of Hannover which he had originally been hired to write, and which had reached only the eleventh century when Georg Ludwig went to England as George I (1714) and conveniently left the aged Leibniz behind to finish the work.

Leibniz's moral and political thought is a particularly difficult challenge, since it was developed through so many short summaries and sketches and, as Riley shows, is linked virtually to every other idea Leibniz's synthetic mind ever entertained, mathematics and physics included. Though the general topic has received notable treatments in other languages, particularly French (Grua, Sève, Robinet), there is nothing of this scale and thoroughness in English. Riley's book, the product of nearly a lifetime, is a work of tremendous erudition that demonstrates convincingly the primacy of the practical in Leibniz's overall endeavor. It is a well crafted piece, and Riley is in total command of his sources. Indeed, he provides many new, in-text translations of materials not heretofore available. Moreover, there are well integrated discussions of Leibniz's efforts at theodicy and confessional unification (the same thing, since disorder is a form of evil), and perceptive comparative analyses of Bossuet, Fénelon, and Malebranche, for instance.

Yet Leibniz's tendencies toward diffusion and repetition, and his frequent 'summarizing', are sometimes at cross-purposes with his expositor's aims of clarity and completeness. Thus, portions of the book are muddied by excessive quotation, and the ever detailed discussion of multiple (only slightly varying) texts from different periods of Leibniz's career occasionally creates redundancies. This result is partly owing to Riley's evident enthusiasm for his author, and to his concern to show that Leibniz can parry or elude particular critical challenges. There is always another text ... . Lest this be misunderstood, Riley is scrupulously fair in his treatment of difficulties in Leibniz's position, but perhaps he follows him into too many windings in the attempt to elude them. After a while, one almost knows what Leibniz will (must) say. The average reader may sometimes feel as in a labyrinth, albeit a slightly familiar one.

Part of this problem might have been alleviated with a more explicit Contents page reflecting the numerous subdivisions of each chapter and their place in the entire scheme. Perhaps it was the cost-conscious publisher who skimped here. A similar but more serious complaint concerns the puzzling absence of a Bibliography. Given Riley's extensive textual analyses and the inclusion of much new material not available to readers, as well as the book's status as the most extensive treatment of its theme in English, there is simply no scholarly excuse for the omission. Furthermore, the notes might have been placed at the bottom of each page, allowing other scholars an easier look behind the scenes during Riley's intricate performance. As it is, one must rummage through some fifty pages of endnotes for precise references and comments.