

BOOK REVIEW

Emil Višňovský, Miroslav Popper, and Jana Plichtová (Eds.). *Příběhy o hľadání mysle* (Narratives of Exploring the Mind). Bratislava: Veda, 2001, 247 p. ISBN: 80-224-0679-1.

It is not necessary to emphasize that there are a variety of theories of and approaches to, often controversial, the exploration of the mind and the consciousness. How can we avoid getting lost in this "stormy ocean"?

That was the problem, with which philosophers E. Višňovský, J. Šulavík, S. Gáliková, J. Hvorecký, Z. Kalnická, J. L. Geller and psychologists, J. Plichtová and M. Popper had to cope before they set out to write their "narratives" of the human mind. One of the advantages of this event is undoubtedly the fact that the authors—philosophers—also have sense of the concrete material and, on the other hand, the psychologists are able to appreciate the importance even of very speculative theories. It can also be said that the "narratives" are rising just where the authors dared to cross the borders of their disciplines.

In the first chapter (*The mental as a problem: a look into history*), Emil Višňovský gives a short history of the philosophy of mind from ancient times to the twentieth century. It includes, *inter alia*, such concepts as: Plato's understanding of the soul (autonomy and immortality of the soul) and Aristotle's "reductionism" (the soul cannot be separated from the body), the famous Descartes' radical break (the total separation of the mental from the physical), the emergence of scientific psychology in the nineteenth century (a step of psychology towards physiology), behaviourism of the first half of the twentieth century (attempt at marginalizing or even pushing the mental out of psychology). However, the removal of the mental from the game failed (in spite of persistent attempts—e. g. eliminative materialism, etc.—p. 27), and the mental returned in triumph. It was not so much an anti-reductionistic approach of some analytic philosophers (J. Searle, D. Davidson, etc.) that played a significant role as the author of the chapter thinks, but primarily the works of N. Chomsky and his followers on the wave, where few would expect it: on the computer (cognitive) revolution in the second half of the twentieth century.

The recapitulation of historical conceptions can serve for better understanding of contemporary conceptions and efforts in the philosophy of mind, which have often been shaped in sharp polemics with them (e.g. the conception of the Churchlands, Dennett, Rorty, etc.) and without the knowledge of historical background they would hardly be understandable. In this sense, this chapter can also be understood as a support to the sixth chapter, where E. Višňovský analyses contemporary conceptions of the mental in more detail.

In the second chapter (*On the way to demystification of the mental*), S. Gáliková writes about three areas: consciousness, folk psychology and the mind-body problem. As regards the consciousness, the author analyses its various characteristics and approaches to it. The author seeks to capture the issue of consciousness in as complex and comprehensive form as possible. On the other hand, this approach has its disadvantages—classification dominates over explication.

One of the most interesting parts of the chapter is the analysis of the status of the explanatory strength of folk psychology. Folk psychology is currently a very frequent topic. To say it in a few words, discussion is held about what is the meaning of and how important is the mentalistic vocabulary (to think, believe, will, understand, be scared... in terms of using these terms in everyday communication). The author analyses the negative attitudes to folk psychology (Wittgenstein, the Churchlands—non-scientific, non-theoretical and the more positive approaches (of Wilkes and Dennett, in particular, who regards it as a very effective communication strategy). I consider conceptions with the positive approach to folk psychology to be more hopeful. The problem of making the means of folk psychology more scientific is not at issue, it is rather a study into the positives and the essence of its functioning. The most important discipline, which can shed light on these processes, is developmental psychology.