BOOK REVIEW

Emil Višňovský, Miroslav Popper, and Jana Plichtová (Eds.). Príbehy o hľadaní 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.

As for the mind-body problem, the author reconstructs the quarrels between the reductionists (the mental is reducible to the physical) and anti-reductionists (claiming that it is not possible). To simplify matters, it revolves around the question raised by the author of the chapter—does the demarcation between the mental and the physical, between the mind and the brain make sense? The reply is negative from those, who study the mental from the objective third-person position (it is the case of behaviourists, physicalists, and functionalists), that is, their exploration is based on the explication of the ideas, visions, and feelings from the "outside". On the other side are the people, who study the mental from the perspective of the first person on the basis of the cognition of the mental world from the "inside". Then questions arise whether the mental can be investigated objectively or is it a subjective, non-reducible quality of its bearer (what is postulated through the concepts of phenomenal consciousness and qualia), and, therefore, it is not sufficiently explicable by the concepts and methods of natural sciences. This dilemma is one of the central topics of the monograph (in many parts there are arguments more or less in favour of one or the other side).

The following chapter also deals with the issue of consciousness. Until recently, consciousness has been an exclusive domain of philosophy. The situation has radically changed and today various aspects of consciousness become a subject of intense scientific investigation. The author of the third chapter J. Hvorecký is interested in how such a situation influences philosophy (*Current philosophy of consciousness: an outline of the situation).*

Consciousness is often divided into the so-called accessible consciousness (what is accessible from the objective point of view—for instance, the activity of neurons) and phenomenal consciousness (based on one's own phenomenal experience not transferable from the experience of another one, which is inaccessible to the other). The author studies in more detail the phenomenal consciousness, more precisely, qualia—the phenomenal qualities (for example sensation of pain), a sort of the units of subjective experiences. The author considers three various approaches to qualia: 1. The eliminativist approach—denial of the existence of qualia as independent phenomenal qualities, "replies to the questions about the character of consciousness are hidden exclusively in our brain" (p. 65) (in the clearest form it can be found in the Churchlands); 2. The phenomenal approach—here can be found a variety of opinions—from the position that the investigation of qualia is principally inaccessible (McGinn's "we are cognitively closed") up to the position that they are graspable by the quantum image of the world (Penrose) or by naturalistic panpsychism (Chalmers' "all mass has, in addition to the known physical properties, also a sort of protoconsciousness", p. 66); 3. The representationalistic approach—qualia are seen as very complex and rich representations (it is a widespread position). There is an ongoing discussion about the possibility or impossibility of the transformation of qualia to representations (whether phenomenal qualities and representations are or are not identical).

However, it seems that the author of the chapter himself had some doubts about whether qualia are a real problem. His remark confirms it: "If their postulation is justified, they will have a significant hold on our relation to the objective knowledge. If philosophers make mistakes in their postulation, empirical sciences will definitely not forget them" (p.64).

In the fourth chapter (*Basic types of the discourses about mind*) M. Popper analyses (*inter alia*) the boundaries of the investigation of the mind by the methods of natural sciences and standard psychology and what are the alternatives—a holistic approach to the study into the mental and the emphasis on the importance of subjectivity (phenomenology and hermeneutics). The author distinguishes between the two basic types of discourses—classical discourse (a search for hard universal rules) in studying human sciences (including cognitive sciences) and postmodern discourses (each type of discourse has its own rules). According to him, the second type should be dominant in studying social relations (its most effective assertion is through the conception of social constructivism, p. 81). The author gives a dramatic account of the tension and the current struggle between these two types discourses. The first approach is designated as reductionistic and the second, which is preferred by the author, as seeking to avoid its vicissitudes (antireductionistic). The author performs his analyses on several levels (methodological, epistemological, ontological and practical).

Firstly, it would be a great mistake to understand reductionism only pejoratively. The author also realizes it in some parts of his chapter (without the reductionistic approach it would not be possible to accomplish some important discoveries), but mostly his rhetoric is very antireductionistic. Secondly, the borderline between the reductionistic and antireductionistic approaches is relative. Nowadays, cognitive sciences also study the matters, which formerly belonged to the antireductionistic domain (and were regarded as in principle not examinable by science—let us mention what has already been said—how has the approach to the exploration of consciousness changed). Some other problems can also be presented. Up until quite recently, mindreading has been considered as in principle not explorable. To-

day it is a legitimate scientific problem. Just as mechanisms built into our mind (brain) to recognize faces are studied, mechanisms for reading the mind of other people are also examined.

I want to mention that cognitive sciences definitely do not ignore the sociocultural situation (p. 84, p. 86) and/or the sociocultural determination of the mind. This is one of the repeating cliché also in other chapters. This raises a question: In what sense is the mind a social product? An opposite question is also interesting: in what sense is the mind not a social product? (The answer to the latter question can significantly contribute to answering the former question.) In any case, the human mind is not an empty storehouse, into which language and culture are placed from the outside. It is true that objective social rules of the world given for ever do not exist (p. 97), but there are innate dispositions (cognitive intuitions) for certain types of social behaviour. For example, the inborn fear of the strange (and also the inborn predisposition to create communities) can under certain conditions be modified to socially undesirable behaviour (for instance racism).

This leads to a slightly different answer to what is a classical and what is an alternative paradigm (or discourse). Classical and unsustainable is the vision of the mind as an empty storehouse filled in from the outside from the social environment. There is an alternative that in the storehouse there are already too many cognitive intuitions (also such on which social constructivism rests), "waiting" for when and how will they be triggered by the stimuli from the social surroundings.

It is sympathetic that the author did not forget to show in the last part of the chapter how the principles mentioned by him can be used in practice, that is, in therapeutic processes.

In the fifth chapter (*Representations: the mental and the social),* Jana Plichtová leans on the theses of social constructivism (like the author of the foregoing chapter). However, her analysis of social determination of the mental is more massive and more detailed (M. Popper is thesis-like). In this connection, there is, in my opinion, some hyperbolizing. For instance: "Human thought and emotions are of social, not of animal character" (p. 107). Some anthropological researches show, however, that the basic emotions are the same in all cultures, from primitive cultures up to advanced civilizations. We are probably born with basic emotions; they are in our mental equipment.

As regards the dependence of cognition on innate structures (p. 111), it is a fact not appreciated properly. It is very difficult to reconcile to the fact that not only physical but also mental dispositions can be of innate character. In the case of the given particular example, the conception of the innateness of linguistic structures (universal grammar), its author N. Chomsky based his argumentation on the so-called arguments of insufficiency, the argument of the poverty of the inputs in contrast to the affluence of linguistic outputs in language acquisition in children. The question why the information output is richer than the input cannot be explained only by the hypothesis of imitation. The language acquisition of a child is not based on imitation. How is it possible that child learns much about language in a remarkably short time and from a remarkably small amount of data? This can only be explained by innate language predispositions.

The author criticizes Piaget's theory in Vygotsky's scheme—the influence of the social background is not appreciated properly. Today it appears that Piaget's mistake consisted in something else. Probably his greatest weakness is in explaining the above-mentioned problems of language acquisition. According to Piaget, language is a product of sensorimotor intelligence. But to explain language acquisition on the basis of purely sensorimotor activities is a great problem. It leads to a question why a child acquires a symbolic function (that is, also language), while, for instance, a chimpanzee, even in intense training or in comparison with a child it acquires only very little, although the results in its sensorimotor regions are comparable, or even better. Piaget is wrong already in the approach to the child's cognitive background. According to him, at the beginning, a child has only basic sensory reflexes (sucking and grasping) and three functional processes: assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. This is very poor equipment and it cannot account for the problem of language acquisition. This is only possible by introducing certain mental innate linguistic predispositions or modules as Chomsky and his students have named them.

As regards the role of the surroundings (including the social) in these processes, it can also be treated so that the external factors of the environment have only a trigger effect (p.110). Surprisingly enough, it can be defended quite easily. The connection between the trigger setting and the innate mechanisms can be similar to that in the ethological theory of imprinting. (K. Lorenz considered that the shaping of basic social relations, for example, who will be regarded as mother of a newly hatched duckling, will be decided after a single encounter with the first moving object, its image being irreversibly imprinted in the nervous system.) Learning does not proceed as a simple filling up of an empty storehouse (as supporters of the omnipotence of intelligent socialization believe). There have to be some innate cognitive intuitions (physical, numerical, psychological, social); otherwise, the mecha-

nisms of learning could not be launched at all. Of course, it would be absurd to maintain that the development of the psychic is independent of the social context, but our mind is not an empty storehouse even at the beginning.

As has already been said, the author supports the conception of social constructivism, which has been formulated as follows: "Constructivists do not make an issue of the truth, validity or objectivity of a particular explanation, or of the predictions and truthfulness with which the statement reflects the observed reality, intentions or emotions of the speaker, or of cognitive processes that enable him to use the language. For the constructivists, it is only the relation between the language used and the topical social relations that is interesting. The analysis of the existent forms of discourse leads them to the uncovering of the patterns of cultural life, which they criticize and change in favour of the powerless (women, marginalized and stigmatized groups)" (p. 128). For this purpose, it is necessary to know the innate predispositions (created in biological evolution) for constructing various social constructions (hostility, attitudes, emotions, personal structure, anxiety, depression, failures in mutual understanding, p. 128). This is definitely not a defence of a variety of politically incorrect behaviours (sexism, racism, etc.) What is at issue is that the better we know what is part of our innate equipment, the better we will be able to cope with it.

What is worthy of attention, are the author's theses about the struggle against dichotomies: mental/social, cultural/biological (inspired by the stimuli from linguistics, social sciences, culture and art, p.129) and chiefly the call for a complex (interdisciplinary) approach, for a new science about humans because psychology has no chance to manage these matters on its own.

In the sixth chapter, (*Mind and experience: the problem of the mental in pragmatism*) E. Višňovský analyses the understanding of the mental and in the renowned representatives of classical (James, Dewey, and Mead) and contemporary pragmatism (Quine, Davidson, Putnam, and Rorty).

The analysis of the conceptions of contemporary representatives of pragmatism is one of the most interesting parts of the monograph. Višňovský begins with the analysis of Quine's results: "The result of the Quine's conception is, seemingly, something like 'linguistic dualism', that means the recognition of the two parallel, mutually irreducible discourses, mentalist and physicalist each for different purposes: the former for the purposes of everyday human communication, the latter for the purpose of scientific explication. It is necessary to know that the first of these discourses speaks about the same as the second discourse explains, that is about the physical entities, not about any special, ontologically independent world of mental entities" (p. 164).

The author then pays attention to solutions put forward by: 1. The conception of anomalous monism : monism "consists in the fact that it only exists physically–as a substance and as all its attributes", the anomaly consists in the fact that the substance has some attributes, which are not physical but mental, and/or there are mental events, which are not entirely reducible to physical events" (p. 166). 2. The conception of supervenience: "mental characteristics are in a sense dependent on physical characteristics or, with respect to them, they are supervenient. Such a supervention could be understood in such a sense that there cannot exist two events, which would be the same in all physical aspects but would differ in a mental aspect without its changing in a physical aspect" (p. 167). Briefly, there is still a problem of preserving the autonomy of the mental and its irreducibility to the physical. It is specific of Davidson that he is a holist in the approach to the mental: "...our beliefs, desires, intentions, and emotions are interconnected and create one whole, one large 'network', which actually could be designated as 'our mental' world. Even if each particular mental event could be reduced to the particular physical event, the mental whole cannot be reduced to something unified physically. Davidson is thus anti-naturalist in psychology, he understands it as a domain, where mentalistic concepts are used (beliefs, desires, intentions, emotions, etc.) and as long as it holds, it cannot be reduced to natural sciences. There are no laws, which could account for the mental and its relation to the physical; the explanation of the mental is only possible on the descriptive basis of the so-called folk psychology" (p. 167).

The author then gives an account of the development of Putnam's positions on the mental (from his functionalistic period through the internal up to pragmatic realism). As is known, it was his functionalistic conception that had the strongest influence and that was met with the greatest response. Its basic idea is that our mental states are only the 'functional states' of our physical states. Two systems can be physically and chemically different but functionally isomorphous. Putnam expressed it very well in a bon mot: "Mentality is a real and autonomous side of our world ... the question of autonomy of the mental life is independent of the obsolete question about the material or mental substance and has nothing in common with it. We could be composed of the Swiss cheese and nothing would change" (p. 170).

The author ends his analyses with the reconstruction of some Rorty's older and newer views. Rorty sees the problem of the mental and the physical as the problem of two dictionaries–the mentalist and

the neuroscientific. The analysis shows that Rorty's outlooks vary considerably–we can find arguments, in which he predicted domination of the neuroscientific dictionary, then arguments that the division into mental and physical is a big mistake, but also opinions that "folk psychology will probably remain the best way of predicting the subsequent actions of our friends and acquaintances" (p. 176).

The chapter brings useful information on the understanding of the mental by the most important representatives of pragmatism in a lucid fashion in a relatively little scope.

The seventh chapter (*Mind and gender*) written by Z. Kalnická and J. L. Geller deals with the development of the "weak" and "strong" sides of the process of thinking in both genders. The study is based on rich knowledge of cognitive sciences (neuroscience, anthropology, and psychology). In my opinion, a balanced analysis of biological and social (cultural) determinations is applied here.

In the eighth and the final chapter (*Mind and the therapeutic potential of philosophy)* J. Šulavík poses a fundamental question: how is the mental health connected with the life philosophy of each of us? The author is able to give a qualified answer because he has prepared a precise structure of the relations between philosophy and psychotherapy. Chiefly the role of implicit and explicit philosophy in psychotherapeutic processes and the role of professional and lay philosophy in these processes can be analyzed in detail and from a variety of aspects and levels. His approach is based on the discussion with several significant conceptions in psychotherapy, primarily with the Knobloch's conception of integrated psychotherapy (Knobloch's ambition was to build up psychotherapy as a legitimate scientific discipline making use of the methodology of the members of the Vienna Circle). For example, the author's reconstruction of the strife between this conception and its opposite conception of eclectic psychotherapy is interesting. The result is surprising: if the struggle against eclecticism would be victorious, it would actually be the end of the pluralism of therapeutic methods and their philosophical backgrounds.

Thus, the author creates an effective framework as a basis for his analysis of the role of philosophy in the healthy and in the pathological mind. Šulavík's work with this framework led him to remarkable results usable in both psychological and philosophical counselling (and he was one of its pioneers in Slovakia).

If a person gets through the "web" of aspects of the mental analyzed from a variety of perspectives, in various concepts (it is fine that often very polemically) because the monograph embraces all, his/her reward will be the comprehensive knowledge of the current state of debate.

Ján Rybár

Comenius University,
Faculty of Mathematics, Physics, and Informatics
Department of Humanities,
Mlynska dolina
842 48 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
Tel.: +421-2-65428862
Fax: +421-2-60295672
E-mail: rybar@fmph.uniba.sk

HUMAN AFFAIRS

A Postdisciplinary Journal for Humanities & Social Sciences

Mission and Scope Statement

Human Affairs (founded in 1990) is a postdisciplinary and international journal for humanities and social sciences published in English by the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia. It aims to bring together contributions from all traditional and non-traditional fields of humanities and social sciences which relate to crucial contemporary human affairs. The underlying editorial strategy is to advance human self-understanding and communication via publishing innovative theoretical, interpretative, critical and historical contributions transcending traditional disciplinary and cultural frontiers. By publishing original and outstanding theoretical articles, empirical studies and their interpretations, reviews and notes, *Human Affairs* serves the mission of fostering multicultural and international conversation concerning the whole range of human and social issues.

Submissions

Manuscripts should be submitted in English or alternatively in Slovak or Czech (for translation into English) in an electronic version on the floppy disc or sent as E-mail attachment to humanaffairs@humanaffairs.sk. Only Microsoft Word 6.0 (or higher) or rich text (rtf) formats will be accepted. Please check for and eliminate all viruses before sending. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal. The manuscript should be in its final form when submitted.

Form of Manuscript

Article manuscripts should not exceed 25 pages, including endnotes and works cited, that is 6,250 words or 45,000 characters including letters and spaces altogether. Review articles should not exceed 5 pages (1,250 words or 9,000 characters altogether).

Please do not use footnotes. Endnotes with references should follow the main text. References in the text should be used as follows: (Rorty 1979, 25-6). Please arrange all references in an alphabetical order at the end of the text as follows: **Rorty, R.** *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979. **Rorty, R.** Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace. *Journal of Philosophy 90*, 443-461, 1993. **Rorty, R.** Daniel Dennett on Intrinsicality. In B. Dahlbom (Ed.). *Dennett and His Critics.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Illustrations, figures, diagrams, tables, photographs and the like should be attached separately following works cited while their incorporation into the text should be clearly indicated.

Page 1 of the submitted manuscript should contain only the title and an abstract of 100-150 words. Page 2 of the submitted manuscript should contain only the basic publishable information of the author, including his/her/their academic degrees, current position and affiliation, address(es) and e-mail address(es), and up to 5 titles of main published works of each author.

The managing editor will acknowledge (possibly via E-mail) the author within 10 days of the receipt of the manuscipt submitted. Manuscripts are first screened by the Editors for initial acceptance decision. Those contributions fitting the scope of the journal are further reviewed by at least two independent (possibly international) reviewers. The editors, with advice of the editorial board and other peer reviewers will make final decision about every manuscript submitted and will inform the author within 3 months. Authors will see proofs before publication and are sent 25 offprints plus one copy of the journal on publication. No submitted manuscript is returned to the author, no matter if accepted or not.

ISSN 1210-3055 MIČ 49 225

Forthcoming Articles

V. Bakoš: *The Coexistence of Scientism and Surrealism in Slovak Culture*
J. Dubnièka: *"Chaos" as a Philosophical Category?*
K. Popelková: *Towns in Slovakia from the Perspective of an Ethnologist*
H. Uhl: *Culture and/or Society?*

Symposium

The Power of Memory: Remembering and Forgetting
B. Brumen: *Transmission of the "Good Old Times" and the Power of Imagined Tradition*
T. Faragó: *Seasonality of Marriages in Hungary: Church Rules and Local Customs*
H. Holmes: *Remembering Their History: Memory and the Representation of Irish Migratory Potato Workers in Scotland in the 20th Century*
S. Hose: *Significance of "Work" in the Woman's Life Stories*
G. Kiliánová: *Lieux de memoire and Collective identities in Central Europe*
L. Musner: *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Urban Narratives as Popular Memories*
P. Olson: *To Toil and To Survive: Wartime Memories of Finnish Women*

SAP SLOVAK ACADEMIC PRESS, Ltd., BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA