

that the notion of free will must also go by the board. In his brief "A Postscript on Free Will" with which the book concludes, the author recognizes this implication but is not unduly worried by it. As he puts it: "While lawyers and theologians may have to confront it, philosophers by and large, have ceased to take much interest in the topic. And it is almost never referred to by psychologists and neuroscientists." That the assumption of free will underlies all social intercourse does not seem to bother him. The problem, as he sees it, is to explain what it is that makes us think we are acting freely. He mentions certain pathological cases where, as a result of brain damage, individuals lose their normal capacity to act as if they could exercise choice. Eventually he comes to the conclusion that "Free Will is located in or near the anterior cingulate sulcus. In practice, things are likely to be more complicated. Other areas of the brain may also be involved." One is left asking oneself what area of Crick's superb brain was involved when he set out to prove, by writing this treatise, that he was not a free agent in doing so and that we, his readers, are not free agents in accepting or rejecting his thesis.

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References

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Consciousness Explained by Daniel C. Dennett. New York: Little, Brown & Co. 1991. 511 pp. \$27.95; Harnondsworth (Middlesex UK): Allen Lane (The Penguin Press) £20.00. ISBN 0-713-99037-6.

Daniel Dennett is a philosopher and the Director for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University who has become well known as the exponent of the artificial intelligence approach to the understanding of mind. Like Crick, Dennett rejects the dualism of mind and matter but is less concerned with what actually happens in the brain when we are said to be conscious. His lengthy book is divided into three parts: Problems and Methods, An Empirical Theory of Mind, and The Philosophical Problems of Consciousness. The position he defends is even more radical than that of Crick. Whereas Crick grudgingly acknowledges the existence of qualia as a kind of unexplained emergent property of certain brain processes, Dennett, taking the bull by the horns, boldly denies their existence! One might say that *Consciousness Explained* might, more accurately, be called 'Consciousness Denied'!

There is much in this volume that is instructive, entertaining and stimulating

— it is a much better read than the Crick volume — but its main thesis is so notorious, so hard to credit, that only by quoting can one reassure the would-be reader that the author really does believe what he says and is not just playing games with us. The denial comes early on in the book but is sustained throughout. Thus, on p.16 the author writes: "I will explain the various phenomena that compose what we call consciousness, showing how they are all physical effects of the brain's activities, how these activities evolved, and how they give rise to illusions about their own powers and properties."

Throughout the book the author inveighs against something he calls the 'Cartesian Theater', roughly the idea that there is a self which inspects the subjective conscious contents of the mind. Like Crick, Dennett is in headlong flight from anything that smacks of Cartesian dualism. His 'Multiple Drafts' chapter on what he understands by 'consciousness' is an attempt to replace this 'Cartesian Theater' with an information-processing model. In his chapter 'Qualia Disqualified' he has much to say on the topic of color. He concedes that: "there seem to be qualia it really does seem as if science has shown us that the colors can't be out there, and hence must be in here" (p.372). However, he quickly disposes of this temptation. "In human creatures with language" he points out there is this tendency "to express verbal judgments alluding to the color of various things". Yet there is no difference in principle here between us humans and a sophisticated robot like the "CADBLIND MARK I Vorsetzer" which can discriminate colors. "There is no qualitative difference between the CADBLIND performance of such a task and our own" (author's emphasis, p.374) and, finally, "The sort of difference that people imagine there to be between any machine and any human experimenter... is one I am firmly denying: There is no such difference. There just seems to be" (p.375). It is the great virtue of the book that the author is nothing if not explicit about the position he holds. He leaves no room for reinterpreting his views to make them more palatable. To those, like this reviewer, who find them perverse, what can one say to justify one's rejection?

When Dr. Johnson stamped his foot against a stone, he thought he had refuted Berkeley's idealism in the most forthright way. I have always admired Johnson's gesture but, of course, it has become something of a joke among philosophers. If I were to say to Dennett that nothing that he has said in the 468 pages of his book can disabuse me of my conviction that there is this red spot that I am staring at in the center of my visual field and that nothing could very well be more real than its redness, I would, no doubt, open myself to the same sort of ridicule as Dr. Johnson incurred. I can only say, therefore, that Dennett's materialism strikes me as even more counter-intuitive than idealism which, incidentally, has enjoyed something of a revival at the present time in the light of the paradoxes of quantum theory.

Like Crick, Dennett never asks himself whether we might conceivably not be machines, after all. And, like Crick, he refrains even from alluding to the evidence for the paranormal which, if taken seriously, would be fatal to his

whole thesis. In his one passing reference to such phenomena (p.419), ESP is coupled with witches on broomsticks — a stroke of illiteracy unworthy of such an erudite academic.

Both books are recommended reading for those interested in the mind-brain problem. Both challenge our commonsense intuitions, both are deliberately controversial, but in both cases the authors strike me as too clever for their own good.

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