

Review of John Searle's *Mind: A Brief Introduction*

By Rodrigo González

Aimed to entice both the lay and the expert, John Searle's last book is an introduction to philosophy of mind, which, warts and all, successfully expounds and reconsiders the origins of this discipline as well as its most important issues. But, why another introductory book, given the amount and quality of the books available on the market? Searle asserts that most introductions mainly focus on the mind body problem, a lesser number tackle the mental causation problem, and, finally, quite a few address aboutness, directedness or intentionality. In addition to correcting this imbalance, Searle wants to satisfy a personal philosophical whim. As he puts it, "any philosopher who has worked hard on a subject is unlikely to be completely satisfied with somebody else's writings on that same subject, and I suppose that I am a typical philosopher in this respect."

To make progress in Philosophy of Mind, Searle says we ought to overcome the naïve Cartesian distinction between the mental and the physical, for that distinction has led to what has classically been dubbed as dualism or materialism, which inevitably assume the exclusion and reduction of one realm to the other, privileging ontological monism. Nevertheless, this account neglects part of what the mind is. It's time philosophy of mind rescues what is right and wrong in Dualism and Materialism, and furthers more specific goals, such as "the detailed structure of consciousness, and the significance of recent neurobiological research on this subject." Before doing so, it is crucial to rely on a double distinction, namely, those features of the world mentally dependent versus mentally independent, and the difference between original and derived intentionality. To get to the specific problem of consciousness, the main topic of the book, Searle takes several steps.

In the first place, he backtracks the origin of the Mind Body problem, critically explaining Descartes's view, which not only gave birth to what is currently called Philosophy of Mind, but also left the following eight Big Problems to philosophy: the mind body problem, the problem of other minds, scepticism about the external world, the correct analysis of perception, the problem of free will, the self and personal identity, animal consciousness, and sleep.

Secondly, he concentrates on the turn to materialism in the 20th century, and the different available theories that arose from that standpoint. In particular, Searle critically examines views such as methodological and logical behaviorism, type and token materialism, functionalism, computational functionalism, and eliminative materialism. This summary, which illuminates the lay and is worth examining for the expert, provides arguments for/against each position, and a brief explanation of these concepts: algorithm, Turing Machine, Church's Thesis, the Turing Test, Levels of Description, Multiple Realisability, and Recursive Decomposition.

Thirdly, he briefly covers "eight and a half" arguments (and counterarguments) against functionalism, the most influential versions of materialism. Nevertheless, he mentions neither Roger Penrose nor Lucas's objections among them. It would have been both philosophically lavish of Searle to have been included Penrose's arguments, which, besides being based upon Lucas's halting problem and Gödel's incompleteness theorem, may be complementary with his Chinese Room argument. Searle includes another feature of intentionality that also undermines functionalism, i.e., its aspectual shape: "all mental

representation is under representational aspects.” The argument is not fully developed in the book, which explains the “and a half” pan.

Fourthly, Searle maintains that the following misleading assumptions, which compels to opt between materialism or dualism, have caused the Mind Body problem: i) A naïve distinction between the mental and the physical; ii) A confusing notion of reduction, which attempts to reduce the mental to the physical (and even to eliminate the former) iii) Causation: two discrete events are ordered in time by the notions of cause and effect (provided the brain causes mental events, and one assumes i) to iii), dualism follows). iv) The transparency of identity: identity is regarded as unproblematic. In contrast, he addresses the issue of consciousness through the following two steps: a) All conscious states have a first person ontology (e.g. *I feel thirsty*). b) The neurobiological apparatus causes conscious states (e.g. a shortage of water triggers neuronal firings, which translates into the feeling of thirst). This view, which Searle reluctantly dubs Biological Naturalism, is summarized in these four principles: I) Conscious states have a first person subjective ontology; II) Low-level neurobiological processes in the brain cause conscious states; III) Conscious states realize as features of the brain system, and exist at a higher level than neurons/synapses; IV) Conscious states are real features of the world and function causally. Accordingly, consciousness allows causal but no metaphysical reduction, which allegedly overcomes the Mind Body problem.

Fifthly, Searle claims that there are neurological problems attached to consciousness, especially in relation to explaining its structure. These very special features of consciousness summarise what neurology will need to explain: 1. qualitiveness (conscious states are always qualitative), 2. subjectivity (ontologically speaking, conscious states owe their existence to animal or human’s experiences), 3. unity (one experiences events as part of one unified conscious field), 4. intentionality (conscious experiences refer to things beyond themselves), 5. mood (conscious states come in a sort of mood or other), 6. attention (consciousness focuses more on center than on periphery) , 7. pleasure/unpleasure (there is always a feeling attached to conscious states), 8. situatedness (conscious states come with the sense of a background situation), 9. active/passive consciousness (the difference between intentional activity and passive perception), 10. Gestalt structure (conscious experiences come as organized structures), 11. sense of self (conscious experiences relate to personal identity). Obviously, all these features have to be accounted for in a satisfactory theory of consciousness. There have been different theories trying to explain those features on the market, like mysterians (consciousness will never be explained by science due to its nature), supervenience (consciousness is dependant on the brain functioning), pan-psychism (consciousness is everywhere), and neurobiology (science will eventually explain consciousness in causal terms). Despite the problems related to scientifically accounting for consciousness, Searle champions the last view as the only way in which consciousness can ultimately be explained. There are two neurobiological hypotheses as to how consciousness is created, namely, the building block theory and the unified-field approach to consciousness. While the former attempts to causally explain consciousness by blocks of conscious experiences, the latter focuses on how the brain produces the whole conscious field out of which particular conscious experiences stand. So far, clinical studies and philosophical hypotheses tend to favour the unitary field approach to consciousness though.

Sixthly, the problem of intentionality mirrors the problem of consciousness: it is as difficult to imagine how bits of matter become conscious in the brain as to imagine how those bits can refer to states of affairs in the world. How can the brain represent objects through mental states such as beliefs, desires and other intentional states? Searle deals with this problem by saying that the intentionality of language is derived from the intentionality of the mind. There are three problems as to the problem of intentionality: I) How is intentionality possible at all? Here Searle explains the intentional mental states, which are understood as representations, in terms of brain processes. II) The Structure of Intentionality. a) Most intentional states have a content and a psychological mode, that is, they have a proposition, which determines their reference, and also a psychological attitude attached (fear, hope, believe and so on so forth). In addition, intentional states have aspectual shapes, which means that, insofar as they are representations, every representation is an aspect of the object. b) Direction of Fit: intentional states are related to the world in different ways. In fact, most have a-mind-to-world direction of fit (e.g. the belief that p) or world-to-mind responsibility for fit (e.g. a desire). c) Conditions of Satisfaction: for those intentional states which do not have a null direction of fit (like enjoying the sun shining or stepping onto your foot), there conditions under which they get satisfied. d) Causal Self Referentiality: intentional states have a peculiar logic in their conditions of satisfaction, namely, they are all self referential in the sense that “the content of the state itself refers to the state in making a causal requirement.”, which involves a difference between perceptual experiences and beliefs/desires. e) the network of intentionality (intentional states do not come isolated, and have conditions of satisfaction within a network) and the background of preintentional capacities (to have a belief or desire presupposes having certain abilities to carry out an activity). In a nutshell, intentionality is representation of conditions of satisfaction (p. 122), which explains why intentional states determine conditions of satisfaction in relation to their position in a network of intentional states and against a background of pre existent capacities.