

"Mind, Meaning and Reality"

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D.H. Mellor, *Mind, Meaning, and Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. xiv+231.

Mind, Meaning, and Reality is the second volume of Hugh Mellor's collected papers, following *Matters of Metaphysics* (1991). All but one of the essays have been published elsewhere; the exception is 'Success Semantics', a substantial piece of work in the broadly Ramseyan tradition of philosophy of mind and language. (Several of the other essays also defend and develop Ramsey's ideas.)

Mellor's vigorous and distinctive tone echoes throughout the volume. In the introduction, self-described as 'polemical', he defends a moderate naturalism about metaphysics: we should neither 'ignore science' nor 'surrender to it'. He also complains about a number of 'peculiarly philosophical bad habits': relying too heavily on conceptual analysis, insisting that philosophical arguments are only valuable if conclusive, wasting time discussing 'theories no-one believes', and substituting meta-philosophy for philosophy proper. Mellor wants to do 'just enough meta-philosophy to deter readers from doing any more'.

Although the essays that follow are indeed largely free of meta-philosophy, they are generally no less polemical than the introduction. Mellor writes with rhetorical flair and intense conviction, eschewing the more moderate and balanced (some would say dry and boring) style of much contemporary metaphysics. Although this makes the essays a pleasure to read, at times the reader is left struggling to pin down arguments that go by in a flash of elegant prose.

Mellor is an unusually systematic philosopher, and the topics of these essays are wide-ranging. Mellor argues that experience is a natural phenomenon; that decision theory should be interpreted as descriptive rather than as normative; that conditionals express inferential dispositions; that learning by testimony is a special case of learning from observation; that the contents of sentences are derivative from the contents of beliefs; that dispositions can be analysed in terms of conditionals; that only a restricted range of 'atomic' or 'molecular' truths have non-propositional truthmakers; that fine-tuning provides no independent evidence for a multiverse thesis; that social groups are related to their members as wholes to parts; that there are many different part-whole relations; that wholes cannot be reduced to their parts; that the B-theory is right about time and the A-theory is right about tense; that Kant's transcendental idealism about time makes sense as a thesis about tense; that time travel is impossible; and that causation is what gives direction to time. Any scholar or student of metaphysics or of mind will find plenty of interest in this goldmine of ideas.

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