Book Reviews and Response

Owen J. Flanagan, Jr., *The Science of the Mind* (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1984); 290 pages.

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There are two types of AI scientists; call them *P* and not-*P*. Here is a simple test to tell which type you are. You are type not-*P* if you immediately close a book containing sentences like this: "We are led, according to Descartes, to an agent that circumvents the hegemony of the mechanical-deterministic nexus by virtue of its immateriality and freedom (page 7)." If you are type not-*P*, skip this book; you will not miss any important new clues about writing intelligent programs. Type *P* readers, however, will find it a useful and at times illuminating discussion of major concepts in the philosophical and psychological analysis of mind.

   Flanagan's approach is pedagogical, critical (in the broad sense), and historical rather than innovative. The organization is person-centered, with separate chapters devoted to Descartes, James, Freud, Skinner, Piaget and Kohlberg, and Wilson. (If you cannot recite the first names of at least six of these thinkers without referring to your course notes, you will probably need to do some remedial reading before tackling this volume.) There is also a separate chapter on cognitive psychology and AI. Each of the chapters could be read as an independent essay if desired, although there is a modicum of accumulation of ideas as the history unfolds. The readability score also increases in the process (or maybe its adaptation by the reader). While no issues are settled (I can hear the not-*P* types smirking in unison), the discussions are, by philosophical standards, succinct and non-picky. If Flanagan had cut the length of this book by 25%, eliminated unnecessary quasi-technical terminology, and simplified his sentence structure, he would have found a large and receptive audience among the readers of this journal. As it is, it is still one of the best of the recent attempts to find, explain or construct the appropriate philosophical and psychological context for AI. As such it is one of the few books available on the mythical subject of cognitive science.