New essays on the philosophy of Michael Dummett.

Edited by Johannes L. Brandl and Peter Sullivan.

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Contents: Timothy Williamson, Indefinite extensibility (1–24); Alex Oliver, Hazy totalities and indefinitely extensible concepts: an exercise in the interpretation of Dummett’s philosophy of mathematics (25–50); Peter Clark, Dummett’s argument for the indefinite extensibility of set and real number (51–63); Alan Weir, Dummett on impredicativity (65–101); A. W. Moore, More on “The philosophical significance of Godel’s theorem” (103–126); Michael Potter, Classical arithmetic is part of intuitionistic arithmetic (127–141); Eric P. Tsui-James, Dummett, Brouwer and the metaphysics of mathematics (143–168); Charles Travis, Sublunary intuitionism (169–194); John Campbell, Sense and consciousness (195–211); Klaus Puhl and Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, Is every mentalism a kind of psychologism? Michael Dummett’s critique of Edmund Husserl and Gareth Evans (213–237); Crispin Wright, Why Frege did not deserve his granum salis. A note on the paradox of “the concept horse” and the ascription of Bedeutungen to predicates (239–263).

This is the fourth volume of essays dedicated to the work of the Oxford philosopher Michael Dummett that has appeared in recent years. According to his own account, Dummett is an analytical philosopher and he fully shares what he has argued to be the defining commitment of that tradition, that a philosophical account of thought can be achieved only through an account of language. For this reason, the theory of meaning is the core of his ideas, which have been very influential in Great Britain and in all the English-speaking world during the second half of the twentieth century.

The eleven essays collected in this book were written specifically for this volume and several of them were presented to a conference at Stirling in October 1997. The essays are arranged in two sections: I. Philosophy of mathematics, with seven papers (1–168); and II. Philosophy of language, with four papers (169–263). In the preface, the editors mention “the focus of just one of those groupings: the notion of an indefinitely extensible concept. This is touched on by five of the papers in Part I, which variously seek to reconstruct and to assess the case against a classical understanding of quantification, which Dummett has based on that notion. The immediate topic belongs, of course, to the philosophy of mathematics. But one of the central issues raised by these papers concerns how far Dummett’s argument depends on a specific account of what it is to grasp a concept, and thus is rooted in the philosophy of language. This instance illustrates the powerful cohesiveness of Dummett’s thought.”

The papers are rich in suggestions and details, as is Dummett’s case against classical logic based on an intuitionistic interpretation of quantification and a new philosophy of language. In sum, the book should be recommended to the readers of Michael Dummett who are interested in obtaining a deeper understanding of some tensions in his philosophy of mathematics and his philosophy of language.

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