Conclusion
Fiona Cowie

in What's Within?: Nativism Reconsidered
Published in print: 2003 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: chapter

This book has been able to provide a thorough examination of certain aspects of nativism about the mind, such as its development throughout history and the modern advances in psychology and other fields that can be attributed to such. Part I was able to investigate historical debates regarding innateness, misconceptions and clarifications about this, and how we have been able to develop a novel explanation as to what nativism is. It explores the several nativist claims that involve psychological processes, as well as certain general views that some nativists may adopt. While Parts II and III accounted for innate ideas set in this context, and the author still asserts that we should still consider and examine empiricists' accounts of learning and not automatically embrace the promises attributed to nativism.

Concepts
Jerry A. Fodor

Published in print: 1998 Published Online: November 2003
Item type: book

Jerry Fodor presents a strikingly original theory of the basic constituents of thought. He suggests that the heart of a cognitive science is its theory of concepts, and that cognitive scientists have gone badly wrong in many areas because their assumptions about concepts have been seriously mistaken. Fodor argues compellingly for an atomistic theory of concepts, and maintains that future work on human cognition should build upon new foundations. He starts by demolishing the rival theories that have prevailed in recent years—that concepts are definitions, that they are prototypes or stereotypes, that they are abstractions from belief
systems, etc. He argues that all such theories are radically unsatisfactory for two closely related reasons: they hold that the content of a concept is determined, at least in part, by its inferential role; and they hold that typical concepts are structurally complex. Empirical and philosophical arguments against each of these claims are elaborated. Fodor then develops his alternative account, arguing that conceptual content is determined entirely by informational (mind—world) relations, and that typical concepts are atomic. The implications of this ‘informational atomism’ are considered in respect of issues in psychology, lexical semantics, and metaphysics, with particular attention to the relation between informational atomism and innateness.

**Ignorance of Language**

Michael Devitt

Published in print: 2006 Published Online: September 2006


Item type: book

Is Chomsky right about the psychological reality of language? What is linguistics about? What role should linguistic intuitions play in constructing grammars? What is innate about language? Is there “a language faculty”? The book gives controversial answers to such questions: that linguistics is about linguistic reality and not part of psychology; that linguistic rules are not represented in the mind; that speakers are largely ignorant of their language; that speakers’ intuitions do not reflect information supplied by the language faculty and are not the main evidence for grammars; that thought is prior to language in various ways; that linguistics should be concerned with what idiolects share, not with idiolects; that language processing is a fairly brute-causal associationist matter; that the rules of “Universal Grammar” are largely, if not entirely, innate structure rules of thought; and that there is little or nothing to the language faculty.

**Language Acquisition**

Michael Devitt

in Ignorance of Language

Published in print: 2006 Published Online: September 2006


Item type: chapter

This chapter takes the familiar arguments for nativism to establish the interesting nativist thesis that “the initial state” of linguistic competence
is sufficiently rich that humans can naturally learn only languages that conform to the rules specified by “Universal Grammar” (the UG-rules). It rejects Fodor’s “only-theory-in-town” abduction for the very exciting “I-Representational Thesis”, the thesis that the UG-rules are represented in the initial state. It argues that this thesis lacks significant evidence and is implausible. The chapter also argues for some tentative proposals: that the UG-rules are, largely if not entirely, innate structure rules of thought, a proposal resting on the Language-of-Thought Hypothesis (LOTH); that if LOTH is false, then the UG-rules are not, in a robust way, innate in a speaker; and that there is little or nothing to the language faculty. The chapter concludes the book-long argument that there is no significant evidence for the Representational Thesis (RT) and that it is implausible.

The Innate Mind
Peter Carruthers, Stephen Laurence, and Stephen Stich (eds)

This is the first of three volumes on the subject of innateness. The extent to which the mind is innate is one of the central questions in the human sciences, with important implications for many surrounding debates. This book along with the following two volumes provide assess of nativist thought and a definitive reference point for future nativist inquiry. This book is concerned with the fundamental architecture of the mind, addressing such question as: what capacities, processes, representations, biases, and connections are innate? How do these innate elements feed into a story about the development of our mature cognitive capacities, and which of them are shared with other members of the animal kingdom? The book includes an introduction giving some of the background to debates about innateness and introducing each of the subsequent chapters, as well as a consolidated bibliography.
elements? How do innate elements interact with culture to achieve mature cognitive capacities? How do minds generate and shape cultures? How are cultures processed by minds?

Is Innateness a Confused Concept?
Richard Samuels

in The Innate Mind, Volume 3: Foundations and the Future

This chapter argues that cognitive science's concept of innateness is not confused. It begins by setting out the Argument for Confusion, which seeks to show that the concept of innateness is confused because it confounds several independent properties. This argument is shown to be inconclusive by highlighting two ways in which innateness might be associated with a range of distinct properties without confounding them. Although this perhaps shows that the Argument for Confusion is inconclusive, it leaves an important challenge unaddressed: how to explain in detail the relationship between the various properties associated with innateness and innateness itself. It is shown that the concept of innateness, at least as it figures in cognitive science, is not a confused one. This leaves a residual puzzle: if the concept of innateness is not confused, then why are debates over innateness in cognitive science often accompanied by confusion? The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of this matter.

Two Insights about Naming in the Preschool Child *
Susan A. Gelman

in The Innate Mind: Structure and Contents

This chapter examines associationist models of cognitive development, focusing on the development of naming in young children — the process by which young children learn of construct the meanings of words and concepts. It presents two early-emerging insights that children possess about the nature of naming. These insights are: (1) essentialism: certain words map onto nonobvious, underlying causal features (e.g., dogs are alike in internal and subtle respects, even if they look quite different on
the surface), and (2) genericity: certain expressions map onto generic kinds (e.g., dogs as an abstract category) as opposed to particular instances (e.g., one or more specific dogs). The chapter discusses empirical studies with preschool children to support the contention that essentialism and genericity emerge early in development and that neither insight is directly taught. It also explores the question of whether these insights can be derived wholly from a direct reading of cues that are ‘out there’in the world, and concludes that they cannot. The implications of these findings for innatness are then considered. It is argued that both essentialism and genericity provide cues regarding plausible candidates for innate conceptual knowledge in children.

Number and Natural Language *
Stephen Laurence and Eric Margolis

in The Innate Mind: Structure and Contents

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: January 2007
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195179675.003.0013
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the question of whether there is an essential connection between language and number, while looking more broadly at some of the potential innate precursors to the acquisition of the positive integers. It focuses on the theoretical question of how language may figure in an account of the ontogeny of the positive integers. Despite the trend in developmental psychology to suppose that it does, there are actually few detailed accounts on offer. Two exceptions are examined — two theories that give natural language a prominent role to play and that represent the state of the art in the study of mathematical cognition. The first is owing to C. R. Gallistel, Rochel Gelman, and their colleagues; the second to Elizabeth Spelke and her colleagues. Although both accounts are rich and innovative, they face a range of serious objections, in particular, their appeal to language isn't helpful.

The Plausibility of Adaptations for Homicide
Joshua D. Duntley and David M. Buss

in The Innate Mind: Structure and Contents

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: January 2007
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195179675.003.0017
Item type: chapter
This chapter presents a new theory of homicide — homicide adaptation theory — which proposes that humans evolved adaptations to facilitate killing. The new theory is contrasted with two competing conceptions of why people kill: the by-product hypothesis and the evolved goal hypothesis. The concept of ‘innateness’ in relation to the conception of evolved homicide adaptations presented in this chapter is discussed.

Resolving the Debate on Innate Ideas
John Tooby and H. Clark Barrett

Cognitive Neuroscience and the Structure of the Moral Mind *
Joshua Greene
interaction between some ‘gut-reaction’ moral emotions and our capacity for abstract reflection.

Modularity and Design Reincarnation
H. Clark Barrett

in The Innate Mind: Volume 2: Culture and Cognition

Critics of cognitive modularity typically attack a biologically implausible concept of modules as rigidly innate, invariant from individual to individual, and immune to individual developmental context. Virtually all biological structures are modular at some level, and developmental variation and flexibility are common features of modular development, not at odds with it. This chapter suggests that a plausible account of cognitive modularity should view modules as phenotypic structures shaped by developmental programs that can use locally contingent information in adaptive ways in building those structures. Evolved developmental systems construct unique tokens of evolved module types anew in every individual, each generation. A framework is presented for conceptualizing the functional properties of these developmental systems.

Introduction
Tom Simpson, Stephen Stich, Peter Carruthers, and Stephen Laurence

This chapter provides a brief history of some of the theoretical strands that form the backdrop to contemporary debates among nativists about the evolutionary and cognitive underpinnings of culture, and the ways that culture shapes the mind. Summaries of the contents of each of the chapters in the volume are also provided.
The Baldwin Effect and Genetic Assimilation

Paul E. Griffiths

in The Innate Mind: Volume 2: Culture and Cognition

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: May 2007
Item type: chapter

A large body of literature exists on the so-called “Baldwin effect”, a controversial process by which an acquired trait supposedly evolves into an innate trait. C. H. Waddington's concept of “genetic assimilation” is significantly different from other ideas about how this might occur. From Waddington's perspective, evolutionary transitions between “innate” and “acquired” are to be expected because those categories have little meaning in terms of developmental genetics. Waddington's approach necessitates a different conception of the gene from that found in other literature on the Baldwin effect.

Introduction

Pieter A. M. Seuren

in Language in Cognition

Published in print: 2009 Published Online: May 2009
Item type: chapter

This chapter describes the ontological, cognitive, and methodological foundations of language studies, discussing in particular the relation between realism and formalism and advocating non-hardware cognitive realism. It contains a critique of cognitivism, pragmatics, and functionalism, ending with an assessment of studies relating to the innateness hypothesis and language genesis.

Theoretical implications

San Duanmu

in Syllable Structure: The Limits of Variation

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: January 2009
Item type: chapter

This chapter summarizes the CVX theory and discuss its implications for theories of grammar: the tabula rasa position, substantive and formal

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universals, principles and parameters theory, and Optimality Theory. It also discusses the rhythmic nature of the syllable, the commonness of CV syllables, universal vs. language-particular inventories, and “holes” and “outliers” in a syllable inventory.

Epilogue: Case, Notionalism, Creativity, and the Lexicon
John M. Anderson
in Modern Grammars of Case
Published in print: 2006 Published Online: September 2007
Item type: chapter
Publisher: Oxford University Press DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199297078.003.0013

This final chapter draws together some of the main themes of the book, clustered around the notion of ‘case’, drawing out some consequences of the discussion. In particular, it points out the correction given by the pursuit of these themes to the prevalent perceived history of the status of semantic relations, and formulates the overall contention of the book that a notional case grammar provides an insightful and explanatory account of a wide range of phenomena, without appeal to the abstractions attendant on ‘universal grammar’. Crucial to the pursuit of such a non-abstract grammar is a categorially rich lexical structure, and various aspects of this structure are brought together and elaborated. Such a view of lexical structure promises to provide some understanding of linguistic creativity (and its routinization), whose primary locus is the lexicon.

The Innate Mind, Volume 3
Stephen Stich
Peter Carruthers and Stephen Laurence (eds)
Published in print: 2008 Published Online: January 2008
Item type: book
Publisher: Oxford University Press DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195332834.001.0001

This book is the third of a three-volume set on the innate mind. It provides an assessment of nativist thought and definitive reference point for future inquiry. Nativists have long been interested in a variety of foundational topics relating to the study of cognitive development and the historical opposition between nativism and empiricism. Among the issues here are questions about what it is for something to be innate in the first place; how innateness is related to such things as heritability, genetic information, and theories of cognitive development; the status
of arguments both for and against nativism; and how best to understand
the role of genes in development and inheritance. These issues are all
explored in one way or another in this book. But the book also looks to
the future. Alongside state-of-the-art discussions of such established
nativist concerns as language, number, spatial cognition, and social
cognition, this book examines nativist work in a variety of areas where
detailed nativist exploration is relatively new, including cultural learning,
creativity, economic choice, culture, and morality. The expansion of
nativist theorizing into all these new areas shows both the power and the
promise of nativist approaches, and points the way to the future.

More on the Very Idea of Concept Grounding
Caroline Jenkins

in Grounding Concepts: An Empirical Basis for Arithmetical Knowledge
Published in print: 2008 Published Online: September 2008
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199231577.003.0009
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

This chapter discusses objections to the idea that arithmetical concepts
have empirical grounding, other than those covered in the previous
chapter. These include some objections derived from McDowell, and
some arguments to the effect that arithmetical concepts are too rich to
be grounded in sensory input. One such argument appeals to certain
results in empirical psychology which purport to show that arithmetical
concepts (or even knowledge) are innate. It argues that the question
of innateness is at best tangential to my project, since the origin of a
concept and its epistemic status are distinct issues.