This book contains a remarkably coherent collection of papers. The three main topics – language, mind, and knowledge – are dealt with from closely interlocking perspectives with the philosophy of language as the focus. Mind enters by way of the conception of thought as inner speech. Knowledge enters through questions about people’s knowledge of the rules of their language and the meanings of their words.

Let us take the question of knowledge of language first. The opening paper by David Lewis on ‘Languages and Language’ is an important contribution in this area. It contains a useful concise summary of the principles behind semantic theories which are based on the truth conditions of sentences – an approach to semantics which is variously alluded to and criticized elsewhere in the book. Lewis’s paper links truth conditional semantics with the knowledge and behaviour of a population – meaning with use – by way of an appeal to the concept of a convention. The very influential analysis of convention in Lewis’s book Convention: A Philosophical Study is clearly outlined, importantly revised, and then used to give an explanation of the relationship between languages and people. Knowledge of a language is analysed as knowledge of or participation in a special kind of convention: a convention of ‘truthfulness and trust’. A semantic theory should assign truth-conditions to sentences of a language, while amongst the speakers of the language it will be conventional to try to ensure that such sentences are uttered only when those truth-conditions obtain. Sometimes the onus of truth is on the speaker (in the case of indicatives), sometimes it is up to the hearer to ensure the sentence is true (in the case of imperatives). Some may feel that in Lewis’s theory the manifold uses of language are cramped into an artificial mould just to suit certain preconceptions about the nature of semantics. Yet Lewis’s theory is so neat, so thoroughly worked out and defended that it cannot be ignored. Furthermore it is not at all clear that it does distort the varieties of language use. In this connection it is instructive to turn to Searle’s paper, ‘A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts’ later in the book. A close comparison will, I suggest, reveal more harmony than discord.

Searle endeavours to deal with the profusion of possible speech acts in a systematic way. What he offers is a considerable improvement on the pioneering work in his book Speech Acts. The classification he arrives at may still be open to objections, but criticism and further improvement will now be easier because the principles behind the classification are more explicit.
The relation between language and people is also the focus of Chomsky's article, 'Knowledge of Language'. Chomsky argues that the grammar a linguist constructs for a language should meet more than just the 'operationalist' criterion that it generate correct predictions about facts of syntax. It should also furnish a plausible reconstruction of an inner mental mechanism in native speakers which explains those syntactic facts. Chomsky's views on this topic are well known and obtainable from many sources, but this article provides a classic source, being the first of the John Locke Lectures given in Oxford in 1969. One thing the paper contains which is less widely available is an attack on the Rylean, behaviouristic analysis of what it is to 'know how' to do something. Chomsky argues, plausibly, that one can know how to do something without being able to do it. Thus 'knowing how', in general, falls under his conception of 'competence' rather than 'performance', and this is particularly important in the analysis of what it is to 'know how' to speak a language.

Another defence of mentalism in linguistics is offered in Katz's paper, 'Logic and Language: An Examination of Recent Criticisms of Intensionalism'. His use of the label 'intensionalism' for his own viewpoint may be misleading; it has no connection with intensions in Carnap's sense or with intensional logic. All his opponents - Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Kripke, Searle, Lewis, and Montague - are classed together as 'extensionalists' with little sensitivity to the important differences between them. The article is heavily polemical and covers a wide ground, and as Katz confesses, it does not settle the issues between him and his rivals. Perhaps, as he hopes, it will stimulate debate, but I will not take up the bait here.

A recurring concept in the philosophy of language is that of a rule. Knowing or speaking a language is often said to involve knowing or following rules. Yet the concept of a rule has proved difficult to analyse. Michael Root's paper 'Language, Rules and Complex Behaviour' constitutes another attempt. His analysis proceeds by way of examining the formal nature of various possible behavioural sequences. When an organism is following a rule, the class of behavioural sequences it will produce is smaller than the class of sequences it could produce. Furthermore, the sequences it will produce must meet certain criteria: the key definitions occur on pp. 328-330 and require careful reading. The organism is following a rule provided that for every sequence it will produce, if the sequence contains an event of a certain type at some point, then it will always contain an event of another type at some other point, where (and this is crucial) these two events may be separated by an arbitrary number of events in the sequence.

This analysis of a rule needs considerable clarification in a number of dimensions. One point of clarification which I think would be helpful