A MIND'S OWN PLACE

THE THOUGHT OF SIR WILLIAM MITCHELL

WILLIAM MARTIN DAVIES

Bachelor of Arts (Deakin)
Graduate Diploma in Education (Adelaide)
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) (Flinders)
Doctor of Philosophy (Flinders)
RSA CTEFLA (Cambridge)

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
The University of Adelaide

October, 2001
# Table of Contents

- **Table of Contents** .................................................. ii
- **List of Figures** .......................................................... iii
- **Abstract** ................................................................... iv
- **Declaration** ................................................................. vi
- **Abbreviations** ............................................................... vii
- **Complete Writings of Sir William Mitchell** ....................... viii
- **Acknowledgements** ....................................................... x

## Introduction ............................................................... 14

### I: Life and Thought

1. William Mitchell, Philosopher ........................................ 37
2. Science and the World ................................................... 63

### II: Truth and Reality

3. Realism and Idealism ..................................................... 90

### III: Mind and Content

4. “Taking for Granted” ..................................................... 131
5. Mind and Content ......................................................... 153

### IV: The Direct Explanation

6. The Structure of Experience ............................................ 193
7. The Course of Experience .............................................. 242

### V: The Growth of the Mind

8. The Growth of Experience: Sensory Intelligence ............... 294
10. The Growth of Experience: Cognitive Intelligence .......... 381

### VI: The Indirect Explanation

Conclusion: Neuroscience and Mind ................................... 405

- **Bibliography** ............................................................... 425
- **A Glossary of Terms** ................................................... 441
Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the work of Scotch-born Sir William Mitchell, the Hughes Professor of Philosophy and Vice Chancellor at the University of Adelaide, and the first major philosopher who lived in South Australia. Mitchell worked at Adelaide University during the years 1895-1940 and died in 1962.

Mitchell is a major, yet long forgotten, historical figure and intellectual, and an important figure in the history of Scottish and Australian philosophy. He was a part of Scottish schools of thought that influenced early Australian intellectual and cultural life. (The same influence is behind the work of the more famous figure, John Anderson, former Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University.) Anderson’s work recently underwent a revival due to the publication of a recent biography (A Passion to Oppose: John Anderson, Philosopher, by Brian Kenneally, Melbourne University Press, 1995). However, there has never been a serious scholarly appraisal of the work of William Mitchell. At the time of preparation of this thesis there was no recent published material on Mitchell’s life, work or influence.

This thesis fills this need. I argue that Mitchell’s work is surprisingly relevant to current concerns among cognitive scientists and philosophers of mind. He wrote on issues that are only today being discussed by philosophers and psychologists under the auspices of ‘cognitive science’. His major work: Structure and Growth of the Mind (MacMillan, 1907) is a major treatise on philosophical psychology which is only now being revisited in the form of contemporary debates.
The specific aims of the thesis are as follows:

- To assess the impact of late nineteenth/early twentieth century science (especially neurology, psychology and physics) on Mitchell's philosophical work and trends in philosophical psychology during that period.

- To demonstrate the importance of Mitchell's philosophical work in the context of contemporary theories of mind and consent, cognitive science, and the philosophy of science and perception.

- To make clear the extent of Mitchell's philosophical influence on others at the time

- To locate Mitchell's work in relation to other influences on philosophy in Australia.