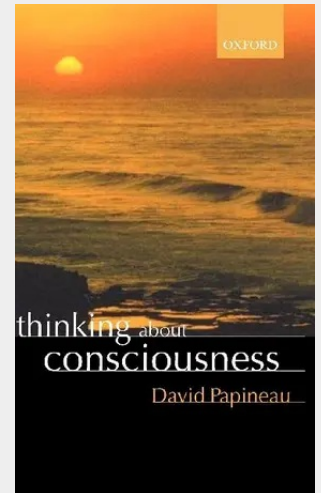


Thinking about Consciousness

The relation between subjective consciousness and the physical brain is widely regarded as the last mystery facing science. This book argues that there is no real puzzle here. Consciousness seems mysterious, not because of any hidden essence, but only because we think about it in a special way. David Papineau exposes the resulting potential for confusion, and shows that much scientific study of consciousness is misconceived. Modern physical science strongly supports a materialist account of consciousness. But there remains considerable resistance to this, both in philosophy and in the way most people think about the mind; we fall back on a dualist view, that consciousness is not part of the material world. Papineau argues that resistance to materialism is groundless. He offers a detailed analysis of the way human beings think about consciousness, and in particular the way in which we humans think about our conscious states by activating those selfsame states. His careful account of this distinctive mode of phenomenal thinking enables him, first, to show that the standard arguments against dualism are unsound, second, to explain why dualism is nevertheless so intuitively persuasive, and third, to expose much contemporary scientific study of consciousness as resting on a confusion. In placing a materialist account of consciousness on a firm foundation, this clear and forthright book lays many traditional problems to rest, and offers escape from immemorial misconceptions about the mind.

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