



# Consciousness and Mental Life

By Daniel N. Robinson

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In recent decades, issues that reside at the center of philosophical and psychological inquiry have been absorbed into a scientific framework variously identified as "brain science," "cognitive science," and "cognitive neuroscience." Scholars have heralded this development as revolutionary, but a revolution implies an existing method has been overturned in favor of something new. What long-held theories have been abandoned or significantly modified in light of cognitive neuroscience?

*Consciousness and Mental Life* questions our present approach to the study of consciousness and the way modern discoveries either mirror or contradict understandings reached in the centuries leading up to our own. Daniel N. Robinson does not wage an attack on the emerging discipline of cognitive science. Rather, he provides the necessary historical context to properly evaluate the relationship between issues of consciousness and neuroscience and their evolution over time.

Robinson begins with Aristotle and the ancient Greeks and continues through to René Descartes, David Hume, William James, Daniel Dennett, John Searle, Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, and Derek Parfit. Approaching the issue from both a philosophical and a psychological perspective, Robinson identifies what makes the study of consciousness so problematic and asks whether cognitive neuroscience can truly reveal the origins of mental events, emotions, and preference, or if these occurrences are better understood by studying the whole person, not just the brain. Well-reasoned and thoroughly argued, *Consciousness and Mental Life* corrects many claims made about the success of brain science and provides a valuable historical context for the study of human consciousness.

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## Consciousness and Mental Life By Daniel N. Robinson Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1136546 in Books
- Published on: 2007-12-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .85" w x 5.82" l, .95 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 264 pages

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## Editorial Review

### Review

[An] engaging book... Highly recommended.

(*Library Journal*)

Robinson offers up a feast... with sparkling prose, illuminating examples, and original analysis of the rich fare in each and every course.

(Barbara S. Held *PsycCRITIQUES*)

[*Consciousness and Mental Life*] is a major achievement... an ideal introduction to the field of consciousness studies.

(Tim Roberts *M/C Reviews*)

Timely, engaging and thoughtful.... [An] educating tour through relevant key points in the history of philosophy.

(Lars Marstaller *Metapsychology*)

### Review

A most welcome contribution to the current debate, from an author who is a renowned psychologist and equally at home in cognitive neuroscience and in philosophy of mind.

(Peter Hacker, St. John's College, Oxford, and author of *Human Nature: The Categorical Framework*)

Few authors possess the learning exemplified by Daniel N. Robinson in this study. This master of classical learning as well as contemporary scholarship is unmatched by anyone in his field.

(Jude P. Dougherty, editor of *Review of Metaphysics*)

### About the Author

Daniel N. Robinson is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Georgetown University and a member of the philosophy faculty at Oxford University. Producing almost fifty volumes of work, he has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the History of Psychology division of the American Psychological Association, the Distinguished Contribution Award from the Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology Division of the same organization and the 2011 Gittler Award from the American Psychological Association. He was principal consultant to PBS and the BBC for the award-winning series *The Brain and The Mind*, and his 110 lectures for The Teaching Company are among its most successful.

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