

Consciousness



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著者:Gray, Jeffrey

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How does conscious experience arise out of the functioning of the human brain? How is it related to the behaviour that it accompanies? How does the perceived world relate to the real world? Between them, these three questions constitute what is commonly known as the Hard Problem of consciousness. Despite vast knowledge of the relationship between brain and behaviour, and rapid advances in our knowledge of how brain activity correlates with conscious experience, the answers to all three questions remain controversial, even mysterious. This important book analyses these core issues and reviews the evidence from both introspection and experiment. To many its conclusions will be surprising and even unsettling: * The entire perceived world is constructed by the brain. The relationship between the world we perceive and the underlying physical reality is not as close as we might think * Much of our behaviour is accomplished with little or no participation from conscious experience. * Our conscious experience of our behaviour lags the behaviour itself by around a fifth of a second - we become aware of what we do only after we have done it. * The lag in conscious experience applies also to the decision to act - we only become aware of our decisions after they have been formed. * The self is as much a creation of the brain as is the rest of the perceived world. Written by a leading scientist, this accessible and compelling analysis of how conscious experience relates to brain and behaviour will have major implications for our understanding of human nature.

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