



The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self

By Thomas Metzinger

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We're used to thinking about the self as an independent entity, something that we either have or are. In *The Ego Tunnel*, philosopher Thomas Metzinger claims otherwise: No such thing as a *self* exists. The conscious self is the content of a model created by our brain—an internal image, but one we cannot experience *as* an image. Everything we experience is “a virtual self in a virtual reality.”

But if the self is not “real,” why and how did it evolve? How does the brain construct it? Do we still have souls, free will, personal autonomy, or moral accountability? In a time when the science of cognition is becoming as controversial as evolution, *The Ego Tunnel* provides a stunningly original take on the mystery of the mind.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Consciousness, mind, brain, self: the relations among these four entities are explored by German cognitive scientist and theoretical philosopher Metzinger, who argues that, in fact, there is no such thing as a self. In prose accessible mainly to those schooled in philosophy and science, Metzinger defines the ego as the phenomenal self, which knows the world experientially as it subjectively *appear[s]* to you. But neuroscientific experiments have demonstrated, among other things, that the unitary sense of self is a subjective representation: for instance, one can be fooled into feeling sensations in a detached artificial arm. So the author argues that the ego is a tunnel that bores into reality and limits what you can see, hear, smell and feel. Metzinger tests his theory by ranging over events of the consciousness such as out-of-body experiences, lucid dreaming and free will, and he concludes by probing ethical actions and what a good state of consciousness would look like. Most readers will have difficulty penetrating Metzinger's ideas, and those who do will find little that is genuinely new. (Apr.)

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Review

Library Journal

“Metzinger's intended audience is the lay reader, and he does a superb job of presenting his theory and introducing philosophical issues related to consciousness.”

Booklist

“Groundbreaking. This sophisticated understanding of the brain as an ego machine accounts remarkably well for the lived experience of being someone, a someone who transforms a bombardment of stimuli into a seamless present while still engaging in off-line planning for the future and reflection on the past.”

Bookforum

“Metzinger is crisp in his arguments and has a keen appreciation of essential ideas.”

About the Author

Thomas Metzinger directs the Theoretical Philosophy Group at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, and is an Adjunct Fellow at the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Study. He is the former president of the German Cognitive Science Society and one of the founders of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness. He has written and edited eight books, among them *Being No One*; *Conscious Experience*; and *Neural Correlates of Consciousness*. He lives in Germany.

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