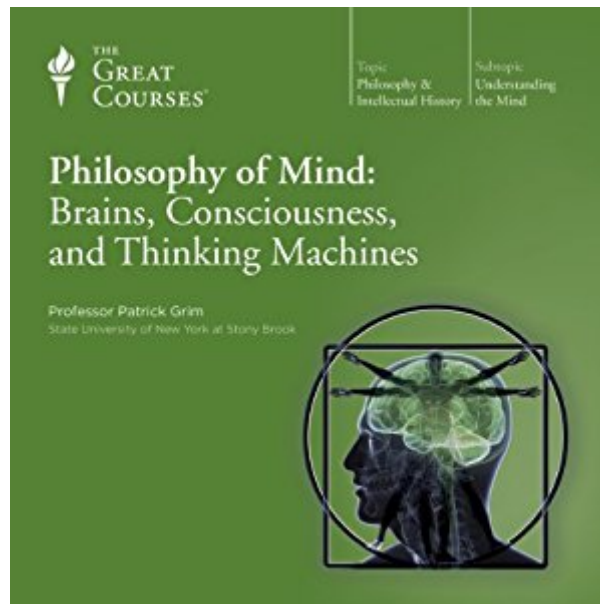# Philosophy Of Mind: Brains, Consciousness, And Thinking Machines

Synopsis

The quest to understand the mind has motivated some of history's most profound thinkers. But only in our own time are we beginning to see the true complexity of this quest, as today's philosophers draw on the latest evidence from neuroscience, psychology, artificial intelligence, linguistics, and other fields to probe deeply into the inner workings of the mind. These 24 stimulating lectures from an award-winning teacher and honored scholar present a clear, systematic, and compelling introduction to the philosophy of mind, exploring all of the major theories, including: Dualism, which holds that body and mind are separate substances; Behaviorism and Functionalism, which stress behavior and interactions with the world as clues to the mind's inner workings;. Idealism, the view that the physical world is an illusion and that only the mental realm exists; and the "antitheories" of mind, which posit that subjective mental experiences are fundamentally inexplicable and will always remain a mystery. Examining the most intriguing questions and influential theories in what can often be a complex and often controversial intellectual terrain, Professor Grim sorts out the different approaches to give you the pros and cons of each.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This course has the feel of a half-semester university course on philosophy of mind, and thus reminds me of the enlightening times I had as a university student decades ago. The subject matter ranges across philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, computer science, and even robotics. As a result, strictly speaking, the course is more an interdisciplinary exploration of what 'mind' is, rather than purely a course in the philosophy of mind.In my opinion, the lecturer, Patrick Grim, does an excellent job of covering this broad range of material. He's fair in presenting the various views, and

the arguments for and against them, while also being willing to share his own views without being overbearing.Normally, when writing reviews, I try to list key points in some detail, but I don't think that's the best approach with this course, since the main questions remain unanswered and possibly unanswerable (at least for humans, in this life). Instead, here are some of the broader conclusions I came away with:(1) When we ask questions in the philosophy of mind, part of the challenge is that it often isn't clear what we're asking - the meanings of the terms in our questions are themselves questions. So as Wittgenstein advised, we need to be careful about spinning our wheels due to our questions being ill-posed without our realizing it.(2) The mind-body problem remains unresolved. We still don't know how to connect subjective experience with our various models of an objective physical reality (which includes our own brains). Diverse ideas have been offered, but they're all speculative, some seem implausible, and none seems widely compelling.

The lecture series is quite interesting and informative although dated and too quick on some of the conclusions.On the positive side, the discussions are not on any set of philosophers or ideas - a common fault in most such books. There is no attempt to move chronologically as a result. The chapters smoothly move from one to the next connected topic. Each of the subjects is treated more or less holistically replete with views expressed over eons as well as proofs and renunciations - both subjective and objective.The problem is not with the giddiness of moving back and forth but because of the pre-formed conclusions that are evident from the selection of the topics discussed to unusual assertiveness in the judgment of what must be true at times.For instance, the lectures delivered in the late nineties develop some strong definitive "answers" on the efficacy or the lack thereof of the artificial intelligence based on the available information of the time. The judgments on our mind from these arguments appear not just dated but wrong simply on account of the lack of imagination shown. The Professor tries to establish the perpetual supremacy of our mind based on the lack of genuine parallel processing, slow development of technology not recognizing the exponentiality, inability to decipher language or "the framing" issues of the computers in the pre-google, pre-cloud, pre-mobile and pre-big data days. I am sure the proponents of these conclusions would choose many other arguments by now to keep claiming why machines are dumb and Turin will remain wrong forever on his prediction of machines beating the genuine Turin test (he was wrong on the initial time frame of fifty years but by just a small number of decades).

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