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“This brilliant book is a must-read for everybody interested in neuroscience. In *The Ego Tunnel*, Thomas Metzinger shows that philosophical discussions of consciousness can be crystal clear and grounded in fascinating psychological experiments and observations on the impact of brain disorders. He proves that philosophy can be relevant to scientific questions about the mind and brain. Read this book and be inspired.”

—Luc Steels, Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, University of Brussels (VUB) and Sony Computer Science Laboratory Paris

THE EGO TUNNEL: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self

By Thomas Metzinger

Thomas Metzinger, President-elect of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (ASSC), is a key player in Consciousness Studies, the fast-growing academic field where neuroscience gets to grips with philosophy, psychology, ethics and religion. Bringing Metzinger's groundbreaking research to a general audience for the first time, **THE EGO TUNNEL: The Science of Mind and the Myth of the Self** makes the startling and controversial argument that there is no such thing as “the” self.

THE EGO TUNNEL combines the findings of neuroscience with the philosophy of mind to find a new and fascinating answer to that age-old question, “Who are we?” The “phenomenal self,” or Ego, according to Metzinger, is created by our conscious mind-brain in order to make sense of the world around us. Drawing on a series of experiments in neuroscience, virtual reality and robotics, and his own research into the phenomenon of the out-of-body experience, Metzinger shows how the brain constructs our reality. What we see and hear, what we feel, smell and taste, he argues, is only a tiny fraction of what actually exists; our conscious perception of the world is just a shadow of the rich physical reality around us. Conscious experience, then, is not so much an image of reality as a tunnel *through* reality – Metzinger's

"Ego Tunnel."

For Metzinger, the conscious self is really nothing more than the content of a “transparent self-model” – an image of ourselves in the brain, an image that we are unable to recognize *as* a model. It is from this image that an Ego emerges. To make its case, **THE EGO TUNNEL** surveys a range of findings about the deep structure of that conscious self. For instance, Metzinger examines how people born without arms or legs can experience a realistic sensation that they do in fact have limbs. He explores both the workings of body and self in the dream state, and our control of those states to experience the effects of lucid dreaming. Further, he recounts experiments that demonstrate how out-of-body experiences and sensations of action and agency can be induced by directly stimulating the brain. From studies of long-term meditators, too, he gives us new insights about the ways in which the unity of consciousness is constituted in the brain. Working from these examples and more, Metzinger argues that "the" self of subjective experience is actually created by our brain mechanisms. Now, as new ways of manipulating the conscious mind-brain appear on the scene, it will soon become possible to alter our subjective reality in an unprecedented manner. The cultural consequences of this, Metzinger claims, may be immense: we will need a new approach to ethics, and we will be forced to think about ourselves in a fundamentally new way.

If actions are really the product of brain states, as opposed to intentions, then what, exactly, is the nature of free will? And if one day we can create artificial systems that generate conscious selves—Ego Machines—should we actually do it? The groundbreaking findings outlined in **THE EGO TUNNEL** have implications for how we think about drug use and the brain; the ethics of neurotechnology; the extent of personal responsibility; and a host of other contentious issues. Metzinger ultimately argues that we must be willing to engage with the serious moral and cultural questions that will arise in the wake of this new image of humanity. At a time when the science of cognition is becoming as controversial as the theory of evolution, **THE EGO TUNNEL** offers an accessible introduction to the field of consciousness studies, a new theoretical vision and a compelling perspective on the mystery of the mind.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Metzinger directs the Theoretical Philosophy Group at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, and is Adjunct Fellow at the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Study, and a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study (the *Wissenschaftskolleg*) in Berlin. Former president of the German Cognitive Science Society, he is President-Elect of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness and has written and edited eight books including *Being No One*, *Conscious Experience*, and *Neural Correlates of Consciousness*. He lives in Berlin.

THE EGO TUNNEL: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self

By Thomas Metzinger

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Praise for *THE EGO TUNNEL*:

“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.”

– *Booklist*

“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.”

– *Library Journal*

“Thomas Metzinger is one of the most consistently interesting and best informed philosophers working on consciousness today.”

—**Ned Block, Silver Professor, Departments of Philosophy, Psychology, and the Center for Neural Science, New York University**

“This brilliant book is a must-read for everybody interested in neuroscience. In *The Ego Tunnel*, Thomas Metzinger shows that philosophical discussions of consciousness can be crystal clear and grounded in fascinating psychological experiments and observations on the impact of brain disorders. He proves that philosophy can be relevant to scientific questions about the mind and brain. Read this book and be inspired.”

—**Luc Steels, Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, University of Brussels (VUB) and Sony Computer Science Laboratory Paris**

“Thomas Metzinger, one of the leading philosophers of his generation, has focused his efforts on the problem of consciousness. That is hardly surprising for a philosopher, but his approach is. It differs from that of most colleagues by a fearless embrace of neuroscience. Metzinger’s perspective is refreshing and thought provoking.”

—**Antonio Damasio, author of *Descartes’ Error*, *The Feeling of What Happens* and *Looking for Spinoza*; David Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience, and Director, Brain and Creativity Institute, University of Southern California**

“*The Ego Tunnel* is a highly readable and enjoyable book about a deep problem: Who are we? A fascinating journey into consciousness that combines creativity and scholarship, it explores our private mental life within the realm of illusions, lucid dreaming, and out of body experiences.”

—**Marc Jeannerod, Director of the Institute for Cognitive Science, University of Lyon**