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# CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness, at its simplest, is sentience or awareness of internal and external existence. Despite millennia of analyses, definitions, explanations and debates by philosophers and scientists, consciousness remains puzzling and controversial, being at once the most familiar and [also the] most mysterious aspect of our lives. Perhaps the only widely agreed notion about the topic is the intuition that consciousness exists. Opinions differ about what exactly needs to be studied and explained as consciousness. Sometimes, it is synonymous with the mind, and at other times, an aspect of mind. In the past, it was one's inner life, the world of introspection, of private thought, imagination and volition. Today, it often includes any kind of cognition, experience, feeling or perception. It may be awareness, awareness of awareness, or self-awareness either continuously changing or not. There might be different levels or orders of consciousness, or different kinds of consciousness, or just one kind with different features. Other questions include whether only humans are conscious, all animals, or even the whole universe. The disparate range of research, notions and speculations raises doubts about whether the right questions are being asked.



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