



Consciousness, Color, and Content (Representation and Mind)

Michael Tye

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Experiences and feelings are inherently conscious states. There is something it is like to feel pain, to have an itch, to experience bright red. Philosophers call this sort of consciousness "phenomenal consciousness." Even though phenomenal consciousness seems to be a relatively primitive matter, something more widespread in nature than higher-order or reflective consciousness, it is deeply puzzling.

In 1995 Michael Tye proposed a theory of phenomenal consciousness now known as representationalism. This book is, in part, devoted to a further development of that theory along with replies to common objections. Tye's focus is broader than representationalism, however. Two prominent challenges for any reductive theory of consciousness are the explanatory gap and the knowledge argument. In part I of this book, Tye suggests that these challenges are intimately related. The best strategy for dealing with the explanatory gap, he claims, is to consider it a kind of cognitive illusion. Part II of the book is devoted to representationalism. Part III connects representationalism with two more general issues. The first is the nature of color. Tye defends a commonsense, objectivist view of color and argues that such a view is compatible with modern color science. In the final chapter, Tye addresses the question of where on the phylogenetic scale phenomenal consciousness ceases, arguing that consciousness extends beyond the realm of vertebrates to such relatively simple creatures as the honeybee.

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