

what one book

Expert recommendations on a selected topic

Brain and Consciousness

I THINK; THEREFORE, I AM. Are you sure? The following experts—physicians and professors, psychologists and neuroscientists—recommend books on the brain, consciousness, and emotions that will help you figure out if you're in there or not.

Oliver Sacks

PHYSICIAN AND AUTHOR



Oliver Sacks is known for his elegantly written neurological case studies. He is a professor of neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and at the New York University School of Medicine. His books include *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, *Awakenings* (which inspired the acclaimed 1990 film as well as a play by Harold Pinter), and most recently, *Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood* and *Oaxaca Journal*.

I am especially drawn to autobiographical accounts of neurological or neuropsychological disorders by those who have experienced them or observed them at very close quarters.

FOREVER TODAY

A Memoir of Love and Amnesia
By Deborah Wearing (2005)

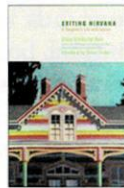


I have been excited by *Forever Today*, in which Wearing gives an intimate, tender, yet sophisticated and realistic account of her husband's encephalitis and the pro-

found amnesia that followed it. The book is the most extraordinary description I have ever read of the effects of amnesia on an intimate relationship and on a highly gifted man. (Clive Wearing was an eminent musician and still preserves his musical abilities, despite his amnesia.)

EXITING NIRVANA

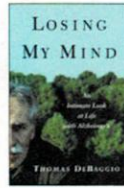
A Daughter's Life with Autism
By Clara Claiborne Park (2001)



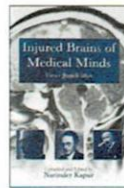
This is a remarkable description by a mother of the life (and art) of her gifted autistic daughter, Jessy. Park wrote what was perhaps the first intimate account of an autistic person in 1968's *The Siege*, and in her new book we see the fascinating ways in which Jessy has developed and her relationships with all the Park family.

LOSING MY MIND

An Intimate Look at Life with Alzheimer's
By Thomas De Baggio (2002)



This is an astonishing and poignant first-person account—a diary, in effect, though with many profound reflections—of what the early stages of an advancing dementia feel like and how they affect one's thought processes, actions, feelings, and even one's dreams.

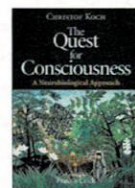


I am also very taken by an anthology of such accounts provided by physicians, psychologists, physiologists, etc., of their own neurological experiences, *Injured*

Brains of Medical Minds: Views from Within, compiled and edited (extremely intelligently!) by Narinder Kapur (1997).

Christof Koch

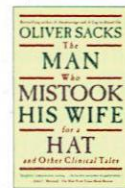
PROFESSOR



Christof Koch is the Lois and Victor Troendle Professor of Cognitive and Behavioral Biology at the California Institute of Technology. The author of more than 300 scientific papers and several books, Dr. Koch studies the biophysics of computation and the neuronal basis of visual perception, attention, and consciousness. His latest book is *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach* (2004). For more, see www.klab.caltech.edu.

THE MAN WHO MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A HAT

By Oliver Sacks (1985)



More insights into the paradoxical nature of consciousness come from medical case studies than from two millennia of philosophical analyses. The neurologist Oliver Sacks, an astute, masterful, and compassionate observer of the human condition, details his compelling experiences with neurological patients whose very specific losses and excesses—such as an inability to see in color or to recognize familiar and famous faces—reveal much about the brain's basis of conscious perception and memory.

THROUGH OUR EYES ONLY?

The Search for Animal Consciousness
By Marian Dawkins (1993)



Those of us who grew up with dogs, cats, or other pets presume that they are sentient, that they, too, share the wonderful gift of consciously experiencing the world, of feeling pain and joy, of remembering events, with us humans. In this broadly accessible book, Dawkins summarizes in a pithy manner what is known about cognition and consciousness in bees, wasps, birds, chickens, rats, and apes. She emphasizes that seemingly complex behavior, such as a swarm of bees searching for a new shelter, does not necessarily imply the ability to think in a flexible and intelligent manner. The book documents the evolutionary continuity between animals and humans, including some basic aspects of consciousness.

THE ASTONISHING HYPOTHESIS

The Scientific Search for the Soul
By Francis Crick (1994)

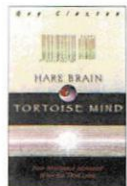


Following his codiscovery of the structure of the molecule of heredity, DNA, and the deciphering of the universal code of life, Crick turned his amazing

intellect to another eons-old mystery: how can a physical system, such as the brain, produce conscious states, feelings, and percepts? In this short primer for the general public, he marshals the relevant observations from modern neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, psychology, and studies of clinical pathologies. He excels at cutting through the Gordian knot of facts assembled by the more than 30,000 practicing neuroscientists to ask the relevant question about consciousness in the light of modern biology.

Guy Claxton

AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR



Guy Claxton is Professor of the Learning Sciences at the University of Bristol, UK. "The essential guide to creativity," said actor and business guru

John Cleese of Guy's book *Hare Brain: Tortoise Mind*. Guy's latest book is *The Wayward Mind: An Intimate History of the Unconscious*. He lives quietly in rural Devon, and noisily in London.

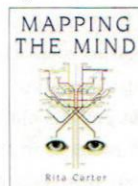
THE ORGANIZATION OF BEHAVIOR

A Neuropsychological Theory
By Donald Hebb (1949)

This classic book gave birth to neuroscience. Hebb was a psychology professor at McGill University in Montreal, and this astonishingly creative (and underacknowledged) book is a mine of ingenious ideas about how and why brains make feelings, consciousness, and behavior. The language is dated, of course: Hebb was struggling to throw off the dead weight of behaviorism. But the book is still wonderful.

MAPPING THE MIND

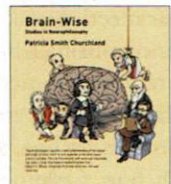
By Rita Carter (1998)



Here is another pioneering book, this time a beautiful one. The first popular book about neuroimaging, it is still the best, packed with really great diagrams and illustrations. Carter, an accomplished medical journalist, put the book together with the help of Chris Frith, one of the UK's best thinkers about the brain and consciousness. It's worth the money for the pictures alone.

BRAIN-WISE

Studies in Neurophilosophy
By Patricia Smith Churchland (2002)



This book gets my vote as the best introduction to neuroscience for being both authoritative and accessible.

They used to say that

the father of American psychology, William James, wrote better than his brother Henry, and Pat Churchland is definitely his literary heiress. In an area often characterized by both grandiosity and waffle, she is a model of clear, deep, interesting, well-informed good sense.

Susan Blackmore

PSYCHOLOGIST AND WRITER



Susan Blackmore is the author of *The Meme Machine* (translated into over a dozen languages), *Consciousness: An Introduction*, *In Search of the Light*, the forthcoming *Conversations on Consciousness*, and other books. She is the author of over 60 academic articles, about 40 book contributions, and many book reviews.

CONSCIOUSNESS EXPLAINED

By Daniel C. Dennett (1991)

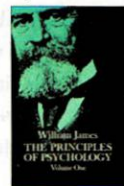


This is still by far the best book on consciousness, and is not, as some people rudely claim, *Consciousness Explained Away*. Rather, Dennett undermines all our

favourite assumptions about the nature of mind and consciousness, showing why there cannot be a little self inside the brain watching a show in an inner mental theatre and sending out instructions to the world. Though it may feel that way, we have to throw off these illusions.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY

By William James (1890)

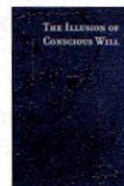


More than a hundred years ago the great psychologist William James laid out the foundations for a psychology that really took consciousness seriously. In the 20th

century, behaviourism banished all talk of consciousness, but now it's back. James's two-volume classic is still a wonderful source of insight and inspiration.

THE ILLUSION OF CONSCIOUS WILL

By Daniel M. Wegner (2003)



If you think that, when you feel as though you consciously willed something, you really did, then you are in for a shock. With delightful experiments on every-

thing from Ouija boards to brain waves, Wegner shows how the brain constructs the useful illusion that we consciously control what we do.

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she has certainly done her homework. Perhaps the best way to bridge the disparity among reviewers is to say that at the very least, Smiley will enlighten, offer advice, and further the average reader's novelistic sensibilities, but she may also alienate the uninitiated fiction lover who reads mainly for pleasure.

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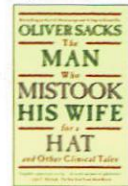
Elkhonon Goldberg PROFESSOR AND NEUROSCIENTIST



Elkhonon Goldberg, Ph.D., is Clinical Professor of Neurology at New York University School of Medicine. He diagnoses and treats patients with dementia, mild cognitive impairment, traumatic brain injury, attention deficit, and learning difficulties. He is the author of *The Executive Brain: Frontal Lobes and the Civilized Mind*.

THE MAN WHO MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A HAT

By Oliver Sacks (1985)

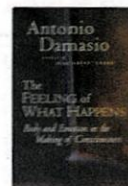


This collection of essays delves into neurological patients and the brain mysteries behind their unusual conditions. An international best seller for a number of years, it is a unique blend of humanism and medical insight by a widely acclaimed author and physician.

THE FEELING OF WHAT HAPPENS

Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness

By Antonio Damasio (1999)

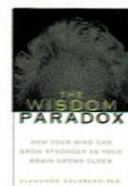


This book is a penetrating exploration of our emotional world, consciousness, and brain mechanisms and how they relate to our body, written by one of the world's foremost neurologists and neuroscientists.

THE WISDOM PARADOX

How Your Mind Can Grow Stronger As Your Brain Grows Older

By Elkhonon Goldberg (2005)



This first-of-a-kind book discusses the positive, rather than negative, effects of aging on our mental functions, how the two halves of the brain play different roles at different life stages, and how to preserve and even enhance our mental powers as we age. ■