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Seven Views of Mind

Lise Wallach, Michael A Wallach



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A CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title 2013!

This book examines seven different answers to the question, "What are we talking about when we talk about the mind?" It begins by considering the dualistic view, frequently taken for granted by students, that words like "belief," "anger," and "jealousy" refer to a realm quite distinct from the physical world, and notes the difficulties associated with this view as well as why many find it compelling. The book then describes six further major views of mind alternative to dualism that have been developed by psychologists, philosophers, and neuroscientists: Some claim that such words are just about behavior. Some claim that such words are theoretical constructs, like "quarks" in physics. Some identify the mind with the brain or with a kind of program in the brain like the software in a computer. Some think there is nothing to which such words refer. Some think mental talk reflects nothing but convention.

Students in psychology learn about different views of mind in various courses, but they tend to be left on their own to deal with the conflicts among them. How to conceive of mind is usually addressed in the context not of psychology but of philosophy, where it tends to be treated in ways that may seem esoteric to psychology students. Seldom discussed in one place, this book presents all seven views and the reasons for and against each in a relatively nontechnical, informal manner designed to appeal to psychology students and their instructors, permitting comparisons and possible resolutions.

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