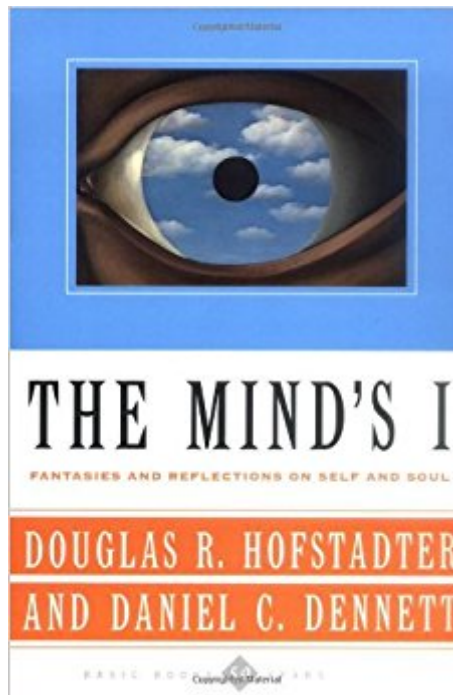




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# **The Mind's I: Fantasies And Reflections On Self & Soul**



## Synopsis

With contributions from Jorge Luis Borges, Richard Dawkins, John Searle, and Robert Nozick, *The Mind's I* explores the meaning of self and consciousness through the perspectives of literature, artificial intelligence, psychology, and other disciplines. In selections that range from fiction to scientific speculations about thinking machines, artificial intelligence, and the nature of the brain, Hofstadter and Dennett present a variety of conflicting visions of the self and the soul as explored through the writings of some of the twentieth century's most renowned thinkers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ever wondered who you are? Who you really are? This collection of writings and reflections by some of today's most notable thinkers is designed to enliven this most central, and most baffling, question in the philosophy of mind. In some ways, the questions posed and bantered about in this book are at the heart of all philosophical reasoning. They are the ultimate questions about the self. *The Mind's I* contains an astonishing variety of approaches to answering the question, "Who am I?" Between the covers of this book one encounters the literary erudition of Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges alongside the analytic rigor of John Searle. There are sophisticated metaphorical pieces (such as "The Princess Ineffabelle" by Polish philosopher and writer Stanislaw Lem), intriguing dialogues (like Raymond Smullyan's "Is God a Taoist?"), and serious but engaging philosophical essays from a host of thinkers (see Thomas Nagel's "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"). Editors Hofstadter and Dennett--leading lights in the study of cognitive science, artificial intelligence,

and the philosophy of mind--follow each selection with a short reflection designed to elaborate on their main themes. The Mind's I admirably broadens their fields to a more general audience. The book's essays are grouped into six categories, each successively raising the philosophical stakes by introducing new levels of complexity. Ultimately, one confronts some of the thorniest questions in modern philosophy here, such as the nature of free will, our place in the metaphysical world, and the possibility of genuine artificial intelligence. The book closes with a playful and perplexing piece by Robert Nozick, an adequate summation to The Mind's I. He writes, "Perhaps God has not decided yet whether he has created, in this world, a fictional world or a real one.... Which decision do you hope for?" --Eric de Place

"Ever since David Hume declared in the 18th century that the Self is only a heap of perceptions, the poor Ego has been in a shaky conditions indeed...Mind and consciousness becomes dispensable items in our accounts of reality, ghosts in the bodily machine...Yet there are indications here and there that the tide may be turning...and the appearance of The Mind's I, edited by Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett, seems a welcome sign of change."--William Barrett, The New York Times Book Review --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Really well done and really well written. I would love this book other than the fact that much of it is dated. That's not the author's fault, of course. But so much development has been made in the last 30 years in the cognitive sciences that you'd like to have newer material. Great book in its time though.

I read The Mind's I over approximately a three week period. For the majority of that time, my wandering thoughts were captivated by musings and thought experiments about cognition and the mind. Whether you're already deeply interested in cognitive philosophy, or if you just want to have something interesting to think/talk about, you should read this book. That being said, If you're looking for a deeply technical discussion or a book on neurology, then this is not the book for you. Here you will find very little concrete fact. However the lack of technical detail and care does not take away from the intended goal of this book (just like basically all of Hofstadter's other works).

Collection of fiction, non-fiction & commentary aimed at freeing your mind from preconceptions about what a mind is. Includes Turing's classic 1950 paper proposing the "Turing Test" for whether

a machine can think. If you think the human soul can't be an emergent property of the human brain, read this and open yourself to a new version of wonder & mystery. Turing says that by 2000, computers would have Gigabyte memory, & thinking machines could become possible. Current estimates say maybe a petabyte is more realistic. The authors note that eventually, long after 1981, computers might beat the best human chess players. Nobody considers the possibility of a world wide web of interconnected computers, or Siri conversing with you from an iPhone 5.

The book is an anthology of material excerpted from elsewhere -- each essay followed by "reflections" by Dennet and/or Hofstadter. There is plenty of variety, so I guarantee you will find some essays utterly delightful and entertaining -- whether or not you fancy yourself as one who would normally pursue philosophy of mind or epistemology. The "Princess Ineffabelle" is delightful in its poetry -- even for me, a lover of highly analytical discourse. "Is God a Taoist?" is a wonderful example of the Socratic dialog -- but entertaining and insightful both as well (and also, as the "reflections" claim, even pious). "The Epistemological Nightmare" is just so many things -- including outright funny. Insights abound here too though -- especially in the "reflections". You think you are "the final arbiter" of what it is like to be you. You know what tastes good to you, etc. The editors show how this is not so unquestionably true. The very fact that we allow "evidence" to support our critiques means that, e.g. taste-testing failures of yours would have to discredit you. If you disallow that possibility from the start, you didn't have a test or evidence in the first place. I gave a bit of detail on "The Epistemological Nightmare", I know -- but this gives you a taste for how you will be simultaneously entertained (even to outright laughing), given insights, and prompted to think in ways you never would have thought of. There's plenty of variety to pick from in the book. Go anywhere, any time.

This book by D&D is a wonderful, elegant, and fun way to introduce philosophical ideas about the mind. Especially in regards to people that have no familiarity, and even no interest! Because of the strong Hofstadter feel to this book (I don't think Dennett put much into this) anyone can pick it up and begin opening their "Mind's I" to the exhilaratingly beautiful philosophy of mind. So, if you for some reason you aren't interested in philosophy (IMPOSSIBLE!), but still enjoy thought-provoking fiction, Lewis Carroll type wit, and self-reflection, you'll still be able to appreciate this book. I particularly enjoyed 'A Conversation with Einstein's Brain' which was written by Hofstadter. In it, the reader is presented more implicit concepts about the mind than they will be able to recognize, with or without prior familiarity with the topics. It's truly a classic piece of art. Moreover, if you're not going

to read the whole thing, or don't like a few essays in a row, don't put it down too quickly! If you hate it that much, skip to the second to last essay (mentioned above) and pry open your mind's eye.

"The Mind's Eye" is a thought provoking book that examines the ideas of "self" and "I" via many disparate authors/essays. Dennett is featured prominently, as are Dawkins and others from the worlds of philosophy/science/literature/criticism/psychology. It is a wide reaching book, and academic enough, while remaining easily accessible to anyone w/ a sincere interest in exploring one's self. It's an entertaining, clever piece of prose and science. I highly recommend it to those who've enjoyed "Explaining Consciousness", and "Breaking the Spell".

If you've ever asked questions about mind, intelligence, identity, and the unity of the organism, you need to read this book. It's a collection of nice little stories and articles that are individually quite digestible. But each one is a great inspiration for questions and ideas and thoughts. And cumulatively, they present a synergistic panoply of alternative views and issues that synthesize into a truly enriching mind-altering experience. Perhaps the best testament to this book's appeal is that I keep having to buy new copies because each time I let someone borrow it I never get it back. Or perhaps it's that I keep buying new copies anyway!

I liked the book...I felt like it focused on artificial intelligence fantasies and reflections more than about the human mind. I expected a book about the human condition, not a book about machines.

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