

consciousness.ml

Description

Consciousness is the state or [quality](#) of [awareness](#) or of being aware of an external object or something within oneself.^{[1][2]} It has been defined variously in terms of [sentience](#), awareness, [qualia](#), [subjectivity](#), the ability to [experience](#) or to [feel](#), [wakefulness](#), having a sense of [selfhood](#) or [soul](#), the fact that there is something "that it is like" to "have" or "be" it, and the executive control system of the [mind](#).^[3] Despite the difficulty in definition, many philosophers believe that there is a broadly shared underlying intuition about what consciousness is.^[4] As [Max Velmans](#) and Susan Schneider wrote in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*: "Anything that we are aware of at a given moment forms part of our consciousness, making conscious experience at once the most familiar and most mysterious aspect of our lives."^[5]

[Western philosophers](#), since the time of [Descartes](#) and [Locke](#), have struggled to comprehend the nature of consciousness and identify its essential properties. Issues of concern in the philosophy of consciousness include whether the concept is fundamentally coherent; whether consciousness can ever be explained [mechanistically](#); whether [non-human](#) consciousness exists and if so how it can be recognized; how consciousness relates to [language](#); whether consciousness can be understood in a way that does not require a [dualistic](#) distinction between mental and physical states or properties; and whether it may ever be possible for computing machines like [computers](#) or [robots](#) to be conscious, a topic studied in the field of [artificial intelligence](#).

Thanks to developments in technology over the past few decades, consciousness has become a significant topic of interdisciplinary research in [cognitive science](#), with significant contributions from fields such as [psychology](#), anthropology,^{[6][7]} [neuropsychology](#) and [neuroscience](#). The primary focus is on understanding what it means biologically and psychologically for [information](#) to be present in consciousness—that is, on determining the neural and psychological correlates of consciousness. The majority of experimental studies assess consciousness in humans by asking subjects for a verbal report of their experiences (e.g., "tell me if you notice anything when I do this"). Issues of interest include phenomena such as [subliminal perception](#), [blindsight](#), [denial of impairment](#), and [altered states of consciousness](#) produced by alcohol and other drugs, or spiritual or meditative techniques.

Category

1. External Domains

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