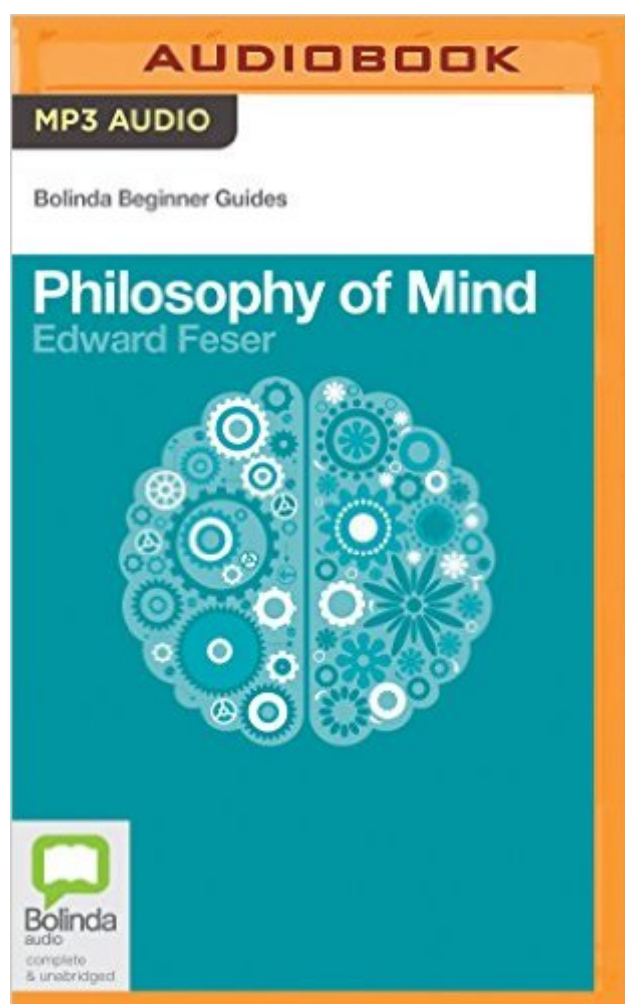


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Philosophy Of Mind (Bolinda Beginner Guides)



Synopsis

In this lively and entertaining introduction to the philosophy of mind, Edward Feser explores the questions central to the discipline, and relates them not only to the human brain and its capacity for thought, but also to the increasing sophistication of artificial intelligence. This in-depth primer is an account of all the most important and significant attempts that have been made to answer the riddles of consciousness and thought.

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Customer Reviews

Originally published in 2005 Edward Feser's 'Philosophy of Mind' is an instalment in Oneworld Publications' Beginners Guide series. Feser is an American philosopher with publications in areas including; Aristotle, Aquinas, philosophy of mind and philosophy of religion. The present review pertains to the 2006 edition. The text surveys the modern philosophy of mind tradition starting from Descartes and running through to the present. In this short text Feser takes the reader through a chronological overview of leading modern approaches including behaviourism, identity theory, functionalism, panpsychism and concluding withhylomorphic dualism. The discussion provides an excellent overview of the various theories, introduces their leading proponents and assesses their respective strengths and weaknesses. I offer a few thoughts for potential purchasers.1) The tag 'beginners guide' is somewhat misleading. While Feser starts of with the basics and covers the requisite bases required of an introductory text, the discussion picks up speed and some of the

latter chapters may be challenging for a true neophyte. The text seems best suited for someone who has had some exposure to the subject matter.²) Probably the text's greatest strength is its uncharacteristically broad approach. Much contemporary work in the philosophy of mind presupposes materialism/physicalism and the discussion is accordingly skewed in this direction. This is not intended to dismiss physicalist views of the mind but, rather to note that presuppositions play an important role in determining how an issue is approached - which options are considered to be viable and which are not.

Feser's "Philosophy of Mind" is an extremely well written and balanced introduction to the different views on the philosophy of mind. For some strange reason, I have never been that excited about the arguments and questions in the realm of philosophy of mind. Yet Feser's book has made me realize the value in considering the questions raised by the study of mind. For example, does the existence of qualia undermine materialism? Does Cartesian dualism fall to the "interaction problem" i.e. how does this different substance (the soul) interact or cause changes in this material substance (the body)? These questions are somewhat indicative of the style Feser takes in his book, for as I mentioned above, Feser writes a balanced book, looking at both reasons for and against materialism and for and against Cartesian dualism. These are the two broad categories that Feser compares and contrasts with each other throughout the book. In fact, the book is so balanced for the first 2/3rds or so that I began to think that Feser wrote it in between his atheism and Catholicism stages of his life, and that he personally didn't hold to one position or another at the time of his writing. However, we do learn towards the end that Feser ultimately defends (rightly I believe) hylomorphic dualism. This is a great culmination of the book, as Feser has set it up so that there are some things that Cartesian dualism seems to answer better than materialism, but other things where Cartesian dualism falls short. The solution to the problem is another kind of dualism, the classic dualism of Aquinas and others, one which is totally immune from the interaction problem as well as new scientific findings in neuroscience.

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