



# The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World

*By Colin McGinn*

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**The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World** By Colin McGinn

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## **The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World** By Colin McGinn Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

You have a piece of meat in your head called a brain. You also have perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and ideas, which scientists assert are related in some fashion to that piece of meat. How can this be? Philosopher Colin McGinn looks at this question in depth in *The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World*, a slim, accessible book that presents a novel answer: we'll never know. We can look at the brain from outside, and look at our consciousness from within, but never the twain shall meet.

Not at all defeatist in tone, *The Mysterious Flame* rejects strict materialism and dualism, which seek to solve the mind-body problem in fairly unsatisfactory ways, and claims instead that our intelligence is not an appropriate tool to use for understanding the interface between subjective experience and material reality. (And, unfortunately, we don't have anything better.) Instead of bemoaning our fate, McGinn turns the traditional questions around and asks "What can we know about ourselves?" This is just as interesting as any question being asked by philosophers of the mind, and in fact seems to merit a higher priority. Whether McGinn's arguments will succeed in the marketplace of ideas is an open question, but they certainly deserve the attention of anyone interested in the nature of human thought. --Rob Lightner

#### From Publishers Weekly

Although its roots reach back to ancient Greece, the mind-body problem has bedeviled Western philosophers particularly since the time of the rationalist suppositions of Descartes in the 17th century. As knowledge of neurophysiology and brain function increase, questions about the nature of human consciousness also multiply. McGinn (*Ethics, Evil and Fiction*), a philosophy professor at Rutgers University, explores the relationship between the brain and the mind in a witty style. The author's analysis of the classical philosophical answers and conundrums emanating from this problem (dualism, epiphenomenalism, materialism, supernaturalism) are made easy to understand for the lay reader. Pushing reason, logic and experience to their limits, McGinn concludes that, ultimately, the essence of mind and the meaning of consciousness lie beyond the capability of the minds trying to define and comprehend them. Yet, he says, in accepting the limitations of thought about thought, we may find unlikely intellectual solace in inexplicable mystery. This is no pessimistic tract. McGinn asserts that acknowledging the frustrating boundaries of reason about reason frees the thinker to explore those areas of human intelligence that are open to our understanding. Except for his distracting habit of defaulting the third-person personal pronoun to the feminine, McGinn makes his case eloquently, with literary examples drawn from areas as diverse as biology, astrophysics and science fiction. Susan Rabiner Literary Agency.

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#### From Scientific American

McGinn, a professor of philosophy at Rutgers University, asks several deep questions about consciousness and then answers them in clear and entertaining prose. "What is consciousness? Where does it come from? ... What does the activity of the brain have to do with it?" His answer: "My thesis is that consciousness depends upon an unknowable natural property of the brain." The inability of the human intellect to resolve the mind-body problem arises because "our minds are not equipped to solve it, rather as the cat's mind is not up to discovering relativity theory." McGinn supposes that brains capable of understanding consciousness might be developed by breeding advanced thinkers or by a "genetically engineered super-mind," but he warns that one must consider what such a superbrained person might lose as the cost of what he gains. "As they say, be careful what you wish for!"

## **Users Review**

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#### **Russell Bussey:**

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or maybe read a book titled The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have some other opinion?

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#### **Vincenza Nagel:**

The actual book The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World has a lot info on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was authored by the very famous author. The author makes some research prior to write this book. This particular book very easy to read you can get the point easily after scanning this book.

#### **Kathleen Jones:**

This The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World is great guide for you because the content and that is full of information for you who else always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it facts accurately using great manage word or we can say no rambling sentences within it. So if you are read that hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World in your hand like having the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no e-book that offer you world in ten or fifteen moment right but this guide already do that. So , this is good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt that?

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