

**The Psychology of Consciousness.** G. William Farthing. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1992, 542 pages.

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G. William Farthing's book could become a classic text in the psychology of consciousness. The author designed to write a comprehensive textbook on the psychology of consciousness from a natural science and cognitive psychology viewpoint and he has done so. Though Farthing assumes a very conservative, skeptical position in his selection of literature, he unequivocally demonstrates that, during the 23 years since the spectacular book *Altered States of Consciousness* edited by Tart (1969), the psychology of consciousness has acquired a substantial body of empirical evidence. Whereas the book by Tart consists of thought-provoking ideas about consciousness, *The Psychology of Consciousness* primarily describes research findings.

The most original views are presented in the first chapter: "The Concept of Consciousness," where Farthing offers a wide and very general conceptual framework for the study of phenomena related to consciousness. He distinguishes "primary consciousness," understood as "the direct experience of percepts and feelings, and thoughts and memories arising in direct response to them" (p. 21) from "reflective consciousness," which "consists of thoughts about one's own conscious experiences per se" (p. 21). The latter includes self-awareness and introspection. Farthing integrates a variety of psychical processes in "a descriptive model of the levels of consciousness." These levels are characterized by different degrees of content availability to reflect consciousness and to introspective reporting. To mention only the most important elements of the model, it illustrates differences between: conscious versus nonconscious processes; focal versus peripheral awareness; and procedural versus declarative knowledge. Ultimately, a comprehensive multileveled model of conscious and nonconscious processes is presented. However, Farthing's disapproval of Freud's concepts dealing with consciousness is disputable. It is a pity that Farthing, like many cognitive psychologists, refers only to Freud's early work. If Freud's (1930/1964) final views are taken into consideration, consciousness, as defined by Farthing, corresponds to Freud's perceptual consciousness, whereas the concept of that which is conscious, as described by Freud, corresponds to Farthing's reflective consciousness (Kokoszka, 1990-91, in press). Nevertheless, Farthing's model has much to offer and challenges further study and research.

Farthing manages to synthesize in an original and comprehensive way the most important features of consciousness and its altered states. He distinguishes higher-

order characteristics of consciousness from its other aspects, while also explaining the issue of the unity of consciousness. Referring to Ludwig (1966) and Tart (1975), Farthing proposes an updated and clearer definition of altered states of consciousness and a list of dimensions of changed subjective experiences in these states. A convincing argument that introspection is in fact retrospection is another of Farthing's valuable contributions.

The chapter on the mind-body problem is probably the clearest presentation of this issue I have found in psychological textbooks. However, taking into consideration that the book is addressed primarily to students, the distinction between psychology and philosophy, which was stressed much later in the analysis of mystical states, should also be emphasized in this chapter. When "parapsychological evidence for dualism" is considered as an argument in discussion on dualism, the reader may have the misleading impression that psychological research solves this philosophical and religious problem.

In the remaining chapters the reader will find a very comprehensive, clear and reliable literature review on such topics as sleep, dreaming, daydreaming, hypnosis, meditation and psychedelic drugs. In addition, there are special chapters on split brain research, dissociations between consciousness and behavior, and introspective access to the causes of behavior. Here, the book may serve as a basic reference for students and beginners in specific areas of research. Farthing's synthesis of reviewed data may be appreciated by any reader.

Farthing alone manages to do what Wolman and Ullman (1987) and their respected contributors failed to accomplish in the *Handbook of States of Consciousness*. He has written the first truly comprehensive textbook on the psychology of consciousness. It is a book which may convince the strongest opponents of consciousness as a topic of research, that it should be and can be studied within a scientific psychology. However, the book may be a bit disappointing for readers interested in the more vague, but intriguing phenomena related to consciousness, e.g., higher states of consciousness, ultraconsciousness, as well as for those readers interested in theoretical consideration and speculation, or in the construction of models. The conservative approach was chosen intentionally by Farthing in order "to rescue the psychology of consciousness from pop psychology" (p. 527).

I also felt a little disappointed by the afterword. I had expected the author to address in a general way a well designed framework for study of consciousness along with the descriptive model of levels of consciousness which were presented in the first chapter. It seems to me that a final chapter aiming at an integration of the data presented within this framework, even if speculative, would have been interesting and attractive to readers who do not place so much emphasis on empirical evidence and who are trying to synthesize information. Nonetheless, *The Psychology of Consciousness* truly deserves the attention of anyone interested in the research and theory of consciousness.

## References

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