



Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective (MIT Press)

Dan Zahavi



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What is a self? Does it exist in reality or is it a mere social construct -- or is it perhaps a neurologically induced illusion? The legitimacy of the concept of the self has been questioned by both neuroscientists and philosophers in recent years. Countering this, in *Subjectivity and Selfhood*, Dan Zahavi argues that the notion of self is crucial for a proper understanding of consciousness. He investigates the interrelationships of experience, self-awareness, and selfhood, proposing that none of these three notions can be understood in isolation. Any investigation of the self, Zahavi argues, must take the first-person perspective seriously and focus on the experiential givenness of the self. *Subjectivity and Selfhood* explores a number of phenomenological analyses pertaining to the nature of consciousness, self, and self-experience in light of contemporary discussions in consciousness research. Philosophical phenomenology -- as developed by Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and others -- not only addresses crucial issues often absent from current debates over consciousness but also provides a conceptual framework for understanding subjectivity. Zahavi fills the need -- given the recent upsurge in theoretical and empirical interest in subjectivity -- for an account of the subjective or phenomenal dimension of consciousness that is accessible to researchers and students from a variety of disciplines. His aim is to use phenomenological analyses to clarify issues of central importance to philosophy of mind, cognitive science, developmental psychology, and psychiatry. By engaging in a dialogue with other philosophical and empirical positions, says Zahavi, phenomenology can demonstrate its vitality and contemporary relevance.



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