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# Ben Lazare Mijuskovic, "Consciousness and Loneliness: Theoria and Praxis."

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**Ben Lazare Mijuskovic.** *Consciousness and Loneliness: Theoria and Praxis*. Brill 2018. 505 pp. \$133.00 USD (Paperback ISBN 9789004375642).

Ben Mijuskovic continues his ambitious life project in this fifth installment of an interdisciplinary series in consciousness and loneliness within philosophical, psychological, and literary discourse. Mijuskovic possesses the unique combination of academic, clinical, and professional experience to cross the aisle between philosophers and therapists. Such a CV emboldens his argument for a return to a metaphysical argument for human consciousness culminating in intrinsic and inevitable loneliness. Embracing this universal reality is the first step to philosophical grounding and psychological wholeness. His methodology, argumentation, and conclusions tend to be highly provocative in the age of contemporary neuroscientific and pharmaceutical predominance.

The author boldly opposes contemporary philosophical and scientific research methods due to their preferences for reductive materialist, empirical, behavioral, and neuroscientific approaches, which fall prey to a similar error. His work mutually challenges contemporary rivals in philosophy and psychology in this exhaustive survey of a history of consciousness encompassing Plato to Raymond Tallis. As he contends in the first chapter, ‘philosophies of dualism and subjective idealism perform a more credible job of providing insight into the intricacies of human consciousness as opposed to the reductivist strategies and methodologies of materialism, mechanism, determinism, empiricism, phenomenism, behaviorism, and the neurosciences’ (54). By tackling a litany of philosophical and psychological opponents and their schools, Mijuskovic strategically establishes a foundational argument, which he substantiates in his sweeping history of philosophy while keeping his rivals in conversation when necessary and appropriate.

*Consciousness and Loneliness: Theoria and Praxis* examines the history of an idea and its many uses in the history of philosophy of mind, as well as to substantiate Mijuskovic’s theory of consciousness and its effects in contemporary psychological practice. He frames the relationship between consciousness and loneliness in Kantian *a priori* terms, which structures the work around a philosophical discourse with theoretical bases to move to a practical discussion of psychological consequence. The book expands and applies Mijuskovic’s earlier historical and philosophical surveys of consciousness as a single, simple, indivisible, monadic first presented in Plato’s *Phaedo* 78b, deemed the ‘Achilles’ of rationalist arguments in Kant’s first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, A 351-2). Historically, philosophers from Plato to the present have debated the meaning, implication, and effects of simplicity inherent in consciousness.

According to Mijuskovic, these discourses progress logically and historically in one or more of eight areas spanning Platonic, Medieval, early Modern, and Contemporary eras of philosophy of mind: 1) the immortality of the soul 2) the unity of consciousness 3) a defense of personal or moral identity 4) a foundation to metaphysical idealism 5) the immateriality of meanings, time and space in moral idealism and phenomenology 6) the freedom of consciousness 7) internal time-consciousness and 8) a dichotomization of consciousness between internal qualitative and external quantitative dimensions—which set the stage for discourse on the nature of loneliness within the psychological, psychiatric, and neuroscientific communities.

This eight-part framework structures the discourse around Mijuskovic’s theory of consciousness within most of Parts 1 and 2 (chapters 1-5). However, Mijuskovic concentrates his attention on discourses six through eight. These discourses were not well defended in the author’s four previously published works. Anyone unfamiliar with Mijuskovic’s *The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments* (Springer, 1974) and *Contingent Immaterialism* (B.R. Grüner Publishing Co., 1984) should consider

sampling these thorough treatments of the first five uses of the simplicity premise before reading chapters three through five. Chapters 1-2 cover the first five uses in conversation since they were well defended previously with close attention to Ralph Cudworth, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edmund Husserl as examples of the argument's uses within rationalism, idealism, and phenomenology. Chapter 3 discusses the freedom of consciousness. Chapter 4 chronicles the defense of immanent time-consciousness from Plato to John Hospers, while chapter 5 discusses quality of consciousness in conversation with quantitative aspects that frequently receive greater attention in scientific approaches to the study of consciousness. Readers familiar with Mijuskovic's research should pay close attention to this chapter as it extensively concentrates upon research in Kant and Hegel that does not appear in previous works.

In Mijuskovic's three-part structure, Parts 1 and 2 work within areas akin to his studies in *The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments* and *Contingent Immaterialism*. Geared for an academic audience well-versed in the history of philosophy and psychology, *Consciousness and Loneliness* adeptly navigates the inherent interconnectedness between consciousness and loneliness through the 'umbrella concepts,' which the author openly admits can be 'extremely broad and, at times, admittedly quite vague, even in its general outlines concerning the fields which may be said to comprise it' (62). The interdisciplinarity of this enterprise requires readership with a very comfortable grasp of both philosophical and psychological communities in Europe and America from the Classical to contemporary times. Humanities scholars find this rather exciting and rife with possibility. Strict disciplinarians may struggle with the 'broad' and 'vague' nature of these leaps in time, in context and in subject matter. However, this work is situated perfectly within the Value Inquiry Book Series, founded in 1992 by Robert Ginsberg, to examine the intersection of philosophy and other disciplinary discourse such as politics, gender, religion, health, education, psychology and law. *Consciousness and Loneliness* comfortably moves between disciplines and discourses, demonstrating Mijuskovic's mastery of his theoretical, philosophical, methodological, and practical implications of his argument.

This work continues Mijuskovic's inquiry of loneliness and heartfelt appeal to his psychological peers presented in his previous works - *Feeling Lonesome* (Praeger, 2015) and *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature* (Iuniverse Inc., 2012). Mijuskovic reaffirms theoretical and philosophical claims in his central thesis on loneliness as the inevitable consequence of the simplicity argument's eight uses discussed in the first five chapters. Chapters 6 to 10 explore practical implications and applications of his theory of consciousness while defending the philosophical and psychological benefits of metaphysical dualism, subjective idealism, phenomenology, and existentialism. Mijuskovic argues loneliness is an 'umbrella concept' rooted in the existential and phenomenological nature of consciousness (430). Psychologists would be wise to pay closer attention to this third section and its use of Freud, Zilboorg, Fromm and more. One's theory of consciousness directly impacts clinical relationships and prescribed pharmaceutical remedies. To the philosopher of psychology or psychologically minded reader, these two earlier works should be read prior to tackling Part 3 of *Consciousness and Loneliness*. Taken collectively, all three installations provide a powerful case for the historical and logical interdisciplinary discourse of epistemological, ontological, psychological and therapeutic dimensions of psychiatric, and psychological practice in the twenty-first century.

Mijuskovic's call for metaphysical dualism does not depend upon theological presuppositions frequently subsumed with philosophical defenses of metaphysical dualism. Irreligious or atheist readers may consider his work a viable option to return to a secular metaphysics. *Consciousness and Loneliness* astutely severs the tie between religion and metaphysics, which entails a truncation of categories of discourse in order to defend theism and dualist metaphysics at the same time.

Mijuskovic's theory of consciousness coheres with philosophical discourse from Plato to the present while avoiding the Medieval, Enlightenment and Contemporary argument for dualist metaphysics integrating theism, fideism or religious justifications such as Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, William James, and Richard Swinburne. Rejecting theism or fideism does not logically necessitate a turn away from dualist metaphysics or idealism as in the Logical Positivists and Analytic Philosophers in the twentieth century elevation of reason and empiricism.

Philosophers of mind, psychologists and clinical psychiatrists should all consider Mijuskovic's thesis in its unique combination of metaphysical dualism and existentialist psychology. His direct challenge against materialist, behaviorist, and neuro-pharmacological solutions to loneliness demonstrates his courage and passion for patients he witnessed in his career as a social worker. Some of his most provocative sentiments tie to his caseload and the human element in this larger philosophical and psychological discourse. Mijuskovic humanizes his clients selectively, but powerfully, as seen in his retelling of a twenty-year old Hispanic woman's rape and subsequent unraveling following this most unholy act by her father. Rather than a pharmaceutical remedy, 'What the young woman wanted more than anything was for the father to acknowledge what he had done; to "own" the violation of his daughter' (424). The recommended pharmaceutical approach to the depression and anxiety resulting from traumatic events cannot possibly resolve deeper existential realities rooted in a materialist philosophy of consciousness—is irresponsible according to Mijuskovic's thesis.

Mijuskovic concludes his work with a call to bolster our basic human relationships as a therapeutic measure accessible to every one of us: 'Thus the most powerful *positive* affective bond soldering one soul to another is constituted through *empathy*' (440). The problem of consciousness and loneliness find mutually philosophical grounding and psychological benefits in the wisdom of a timeless emphasis upon friendship, intimacy and soulful connections as seen in Aristotle, Augustine, Montaigne and Husserl. Mijuskovic eloquently concludes his tome with sage advice bolstered by hundreds of pages of philosophical and psychological research: 'No other animal except a human one can intend, mean, and reflexively share it with another being. That is both our human salvation and our redemption from all the horrors of life. That is the compensation for our human existence' (442).

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