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Mindfucking: A Critique of Mental Manipulation

Colin McGinn

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Being surrounded by bullshit is one thing. Having your mind fucked is quite another. The former is irritating, but the latter is violating and intrusive (unless you give your consent). If someone manipulates your thoughts and emotions, messing with your head, you naturally feel resentment: he or she has distorted your perceptions, disturbed your feelings, maybe even usurped your self. Mindfucking is a prevalent aspect of contemporary culture and the agent can range from an individual to a whole state, from personal mind games to wholesale propaganda.In "Mindfucking", Colin McGinn investigates and clarifies this phenomenon, taking in the ancient Greeks, Shakespeare and modern techniques of thought control. McGinn assembles the conceptual components of this most complex of concepts - trust, deception, emotion, manipulation, false belief, vulnerability - and explores its very nature. Is philosophy, as a discipline, a type of mindfuck, asks McGinn? Is romantic love a species of mindfuck? The essence is psychological upheaval or disorientation, often abetted by the weaknesses of the victim. Jealousy, insecurity and prejudice can aid the mindfuck. Delusion is the general result, sometimes insanity. How mindfucked are you? It's hard to say from the inside, but being aware of the phenomenon offers at least some protection.

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