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ATTENTION AND MENTAL CONTROL

Carolyn Dicey Jennings
University of California



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One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
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Attention and Mental Control

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Carolyn Dicey Jennings
University of California

Author for correspondence: Carolyn Dicey Jennings, cjennings3@ucmerced.edu

Abstract: Mental control refers to the ability we have to control our own minds. Its primary expression, attention, has become a popular topic for philosophers in the past few decades, generating the need for a primer on the concept. It is related to self-control, which typically refers to the maintenance of a preferred behavior in the face of temptation. While mental control is a distinct concept, criticisms of self-control can also be applied to mental control, such as that it implies the existence of an unscientific homunculus-like agent or is not a natural kind. Yet, as this Element suggests, a scientifically grounded account of mental control remains possible. The Element is organized into five main sections, which cover the concept of mental control, the relationship between mental control and attention, the phenomena of meditation and mind wandering, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and emergence-based accounts of mental control, including an original account by the author.

Keywords: mind, attention, control, emergence, neuroscience

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