

CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

Is consciousness
a blobby thing
that happens to be
attached to my body?

Is consciousness
like pixie dust
that God sprinkled
over the atoms
when He made
the world?

Is consciousness
a special fact
that can only be known
by experiencing it?

Then, if that's the criterion,
why are you surprised
that science
can't explain it?

And anyway,
what do you mean
by explanation?

When I regain consciousness
after being knocked out
by heavy drugs,
is that really something
we can't explain?

Not if consciousness
is some fuzzy blob
that happens to be
attached to a body—

or fairy dust
that God sprinkled
over the atoms
when He made the world.

Yes indeed, it's true:
biology won't make a bat
out of you.

Is this science?
Is this fantasy?

If you have to ask,
you'll never know,
said Louis Armstrong—
and that's pretty convincing to me.

But it recommends
listening to jazz
more than
theorizing over it—

and clearly, jazz is not
a goopy cloud
attached to a body,

or sparkle dust
scattered across the atoms
in God's creation.

But can't you
imagine zombies?

No, I can't.

Or I have no idea
if I can, or what
I am supposed to imagine.

But surely you know
what I mean
by subjective experience—

and all I can say
is that replacing

one word
with two

does not really
change things for me.

I guess we're just stuck
with this mystery,
aren't we?

I'd like to go chat
with poor Mary,

abused since birth,
forced to study optics
in her colorless bedroom—

and ask what she thinks
about all these
consciousness studies.

PHILIP BOLD