



THE MIND & THE BRAIN: The Power of Mental Force

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Overview

Most scientists and clinical psychologists consider the mind as something that just arises from the neurons in the brain, with nothing beyond a materialistic interpretation. Yet recent developments by researchers have shown the true extent of adult neuroplasticity. And psychologists are starting to use cognitive therapies more frequently, in which acts of willpower by the mind are used to directly influence the brains in mentally ill patients. This book describes the physics behind such a phenomenon and offers a novel way of potentially treating various psychiatric ailments.

"The symptoms of OCD are no more than the products of passive brain mechanisms, but patients' attempts to resist the compulsions represent active, mental effort."

Introduction

"Their mind, that is, might change their brain."

The behaviorist approach to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) involves exposure therapy, focusing on having patients ignore their compulsions to rewire their brains. Yet treatment may involve things such as making patients go days without washing their hands or touching unsanitary things. The patient must undergo intense discomfort to "unlearn" their anxiety. Teaching a patient how to use their *mind* to overcome their brain is a far better strategy. This approach places more emphasis on free will than on strict materialism. While a strict behaviorist will focus exclusively on rewiring the brain through action, neuroplasticity (the ability of neurons to forge new connections and assume new roles) means that thinking is a viable alternative.

Chapter 1. The Matter of Mind

"There is a difference between a programmed, deterministic, mechanical response and the mental process we call consciousness. Consciousness is more than perceiving and knowing; it is knowing that you know."

The paradigm of materialism believes the mind arises solely from physical neurons, yet dismisses "qualia", the qualitative, personal, subjective feeling from a sensation. When people wonder if others see the color red as the same, for example, that's "qualia". There are various perspectives on mind/brain relationship:

- **Dualism**, popularized by Descartes, is the idea that the mind and the body are entirely separate.
- **Functionalism** is the materialistic idea that the mind is just neurons firing, nothing more. Any sense of interiority or qualia is just an illusion.
- **Epiphenomenalism** is the idea that the mind's eye and internal experiences are indeed real phenomena, but cannot affect the physical world since they arise from neurons.
- **Agnostic physicalism** maintains that the mind is derived exclusively from the matter of the brain, but acknowledges that there may be unknowable, immaterial things that affect the mind.
- **Process philosophy** believes that the mind and brain are manifestations of a single reality in constant flux; thus the mind is a *process*.
- **Dualistic interactionism** claims that consciousness and other aspects of mind (such as qualia) can occur independently of brain, not from brain-matter.
- **Panprotopsychism** is the idea that consciousness is a physical property of the universe.

Scientists are beginning to question strict materialism, but maintain that consciousness is governed by a natural law – neither supernatural nor religious. They claim that dualism fails to explain the connection between the supposed material and consciousness realms.

Yet materialism fails to acknowledge any distinction between qualia and brain-matter. If consciousness is 100% material, then human brains are simply systems for responding to biological inputs. The existence of a 'mental force' as a property of reality (not unlike gravity) can resolve the mind/body conundrum.

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