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Mind-brain interaction: Mentalism, yes; dualism, no

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Abstract

A traditional working hypothesis in neuroscience holds that a complete account of brain function is possible, in principle, in strictly neurophysiological terms without invoking conscious or mental agents; the neural correlates of subjective experience are conceived to exert causal influence but not mental qualities *per se*. This long established materialist-behaviorist principle has been challenged in recent years by the introduction of a modified concept of the mind-brain relation in which consciousness is conceived to be emergent and causal. Psychophysical interaction is explained in terms of the emergence in nesting brain hierarchies of high order, functionally derived, mental properties that interact by laws and principles different from, and not reducible to those of neurophysiology. Reciprocal upward and downward, interlevel determination of the mental and neural action is accounted for on these terms without violating the principles of scientific explanation and without reducing the qualities of inner experience to those of physiology. Interaction of mind and brain becomes not only conceivable and

scientifically tenable, but more plausible in some respects than were the older parallelist and identity views of the materialist position.

This revised concept of consciousness as causal, with its recognition of mental phenomena as explanatory constructs in science, has brought a marked change during the past decade in the scientific status of consciousness and of mental and cognitive phenomena generally. Resultant mehtalist trends within science have been accompanied also by a corollary rise in acceptance of various mentalist-related concepts and dualist beliefs in the supernatural, the paranormal and in unembodied forms of conscious existence that receive no logical support from the new mind-brain concepts of neuroscience. Reasons are advanced to show that our latest mind-brain model is fundamentally monistic and not only fails to support dualism, but serves to further discount fading prospects for finding dualist forms or domains of conscious experience not embodied in a functioning brain.

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