

Re: the liver and the brain

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From: Lester Zick (lesterDELzick_at_worldnet.att.net)

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On 3 Sep 2004 08:01:26 -0700, iain.macmillan@health.wa.gov.au (Iain Macmillan) in comp.ai.philosophy wrote:

>Matthew Kirkcaldie <m.kirkcaldie@removethis.unsw.edu.au> wrote in message
news:<m.kirkcaldie-FC9A38.12461403092004@tomahawk.comms.unsw.edu.au>...

>> In article <363d693e.0409021806.4347802e@posting.google.com>,

>> rscanlon@nycap.rr.com (ray scanlon) wrote:

>>

>>> I know that it is difficult for a man, who has spent his lifetime cataloguing

>>> trees, to listen when he is told that he is surrounded by a forest.

>>> Nevertheless, that's the way it is.

>>>

>>> You must try.

>>

>> What a pompous, patronising attitude. I hope you enjoy your insular
>> world of self-importance – it's clear you are incapable of learning,
>> since you already have all the answers. It's a pity that people who've
>> spent their lives studying these things seriously don't agree with you,
>> but clearly you're more comfortable with your smug generalisations than
>> the hard light of real-world phenomena and evidence.

>>

>> Please don't bore us with your posturing, we've seen it all before. If
>> you're willing to discuss something seriously, please do so.

>>

>> MK.

>

>Apologies for a lurker (a biological psychiatrist)posting to this
>erudite discussion. The original post referred to the brain and the
>liver. I thought it might be useful to contrast the brain with the
>heart.

>

>The human heart was long regarded as the seat of all sorts of mystical
>and or magical forces, until a chap called William Harvey worked out
>that it is, in fact, a pump. Since then, over the past three hundred
>and odd years, the mechanism of the heart's pump action has been
>worked out – how the complex interlinked muscle fibres contract, how
>the timing of these contractions is regulated, and, most importantly
>for therapeutics, how these effects can be modified by drugs etc.

>

>*I think it's reasonable to say that the heart as an organ is pretty well understood, despite its being essentially a vast, intricate network of cells which would be pointless to map exactly.*

>

>*My thoughts are that the brain is a squishy organ, pretty similar in size to the heart, with wiring, support structures and areas whose individual function is pretty well understood – visual pathways etc. Bits of brain develop with time and experience, bits seem to stop working (eg DLPFC in depression, Drevets et al. Nature) and other bits seem to depend critically for their function on vascular factors, which appear to be of great importance in the development of at least some brain diseases.*

>

>*A patient with heart failure in 1610 might have cough, chest pain and swollen ankles. Eminent physicians of the time might see chest pain as important, and treat with aspirin, cough as important and treat with opiates, or swollen ankles as important and treat with leeches – all of which treatments would be likely to produce benefits, but not with the mechanisms or for the reasons the treating physicians would give.*

Aspirin in 1610?

>*My hope is that the equivalent conceptual leap for the brain that Harvey made for the heart is near, and that the lag in translating it into a clear understanding of how the brain "works" is less than the three hundred years it took for Harvey's work to be translated into precise understanding.*

Ditto.

>*Thanks,*

>

>*Iain*

>

>*who has only posted previously in response to florid psychopathology*

Regards – Lester