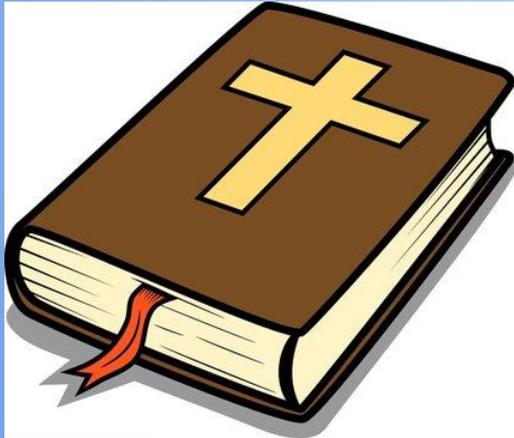


A Biblical Notion of Neuroscience



The Problem

Many neuroscientists (and scientists) are materialists, which is the belief that every experience or thought is the result of interactions of matter, and that souls (and related supernatural phenomena) simply do not exist. This is obviously anti-Biblical. An argument for this position is the *split-brain experiment*. In this, the corpus collosum (the link connecting both hemispheres of the brain) is severed. The patient appears to function normally, yet changes when one eye (or ear) is closed. This happens because the right side of the body corresponds to the left side of the brain, and the left side of the body corresponds to the right side of the brain. In one experiment, it seems like the left side of the brain believes in God, whereas the right hemisphere is an atheist.

The Problem (anti-free will thesis)

Libet's experiment supposedly proves that the brain "knows" of impulses before conscious awareness, "proving" to some that free will (the ability to act without constraint) does not exist, in that free will is assumed to not be determined, but this is quickly remedied by working inside a Compatibilist framework: *Compatibilism* is the thesis that free will and determinism (determined actions) are compatible.

The Problem (on split brain experiment)

The materialist believes that such experiment (like split brains) contradict the supposed unity and simplicity of the soul, and thus, by extension, also contradicts the immaterial beliefs of Christians. The anti-theist (anti-Christian) argument proceeds as follows: (a) After the corpus callosum is cut, it appears that the different hemispheres of the brain have different personalities. (b) If the soul (or any immaterial property, such as belief in God) is without parts, and has a unified personality, then it should not be changed by a material action, such as a cut of the corpus callosum. (c) Since a material action changes (and appears to split) personality and core beliefs, then the soul (and many immaterial properties) do not actually exist.

Relevant Verse

I make a **decree**, that all they of the people of Israel,
and their priests and the Levites, in my realm,
that are minded of their own **free will** to go to Jerusalem, go with thee.

Ezra 7:13 (ASV)

The Christian Defense

This argument is fallacious. On the specific situation of the split brain of a patient in which one hemisphere believes in God (answers yes to “Do you believe in God?”) yet the other does not (answers no to “Do you believe in God?”), it is argued (by the materialists/atheists) that a split brain creates 2 persons, 2 conscious entities. But on an online post by a split-brain patient, he says that, “Fortunately, it is only me in there...”, disproving that under regular conditions, it is still only 1 person, 1 conscious entity even in a split-brain patient. Additionally, it is common for patients under stress or similar conditions (like lack of awareness, drug use) to give false answers.

The Christian Defense (of dualism)

Mind-Body Dualism is the belief that the mind is distinct from the body but controls it; a human being comprises not only of a physical body but of an immaterial mind. Christians have almost always been Mind-Body Dualists. Even in the case that there are 2 “persons” in their respective brain hemispheres, and thus 2 conscious entities, they are not said to contradict each other, and instead co-exist. Therefore, it is possible for one soul to have 2 “streams of consciousness”. Even in the case in which one hemisphere says that it does not believe in God, yet the other does, the “actual” belief the person has is the one involving both hemispheres of the brain, without experimentation. Also, even if religious experiences may show up on an fMRI as different brain regions “lighting up”, religious experiences still “exist”, in that brain activity triggered by it is simply a “shadow” of the experience.

A General Intersection of Christianity and Neuroscience

William Newsome is a neurobiologist (study of the biology of the brain) and a Christian. In general, he says that scientific discoveries make the belief in God justified, and that scientific discoveries make belief in God untenable.

Physiological changes are observed by embracing one's faith.

Conclusion

In this presentation, I have attacked the thesis that the “split-brain experiment” ultimately disproves dualism (and therefore religion), and that “Libet’s experiment” disproves the existence of free will. I have chosen this presentation as mainstream, academic neuroscience is filled with atheists, and Christians are rare in this field.

Citations

- (1) Hershenov, and Taylor. “Split Brains: No Headache for the Soul Theorist.”
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- (3) Corine.lafrenier. “Miracle of the Mind: The Transformative Power of Neuroscience and Faith.” *The Bell Tower*, 26 Sept. 2022, blogs.hope.edu/belltower/bell-tower-volume-1-issue-1/miracle-of-the-mind-the-transformative-power-of-neuroscience-and-faith/.
- (4) Montero. “Ch. 1: Dualism.” *Philosophy of Mind: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2022.
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