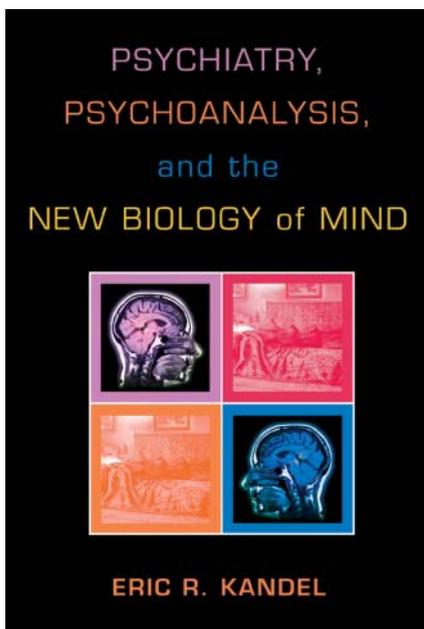


Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and the New Biology of Mind

By Eric R. Kandel. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing. 2005. 440pp. US\$57.95 (hb). ISBN 1585621994



In the year 2000 Eric Kandel was awarded a Nobel Prize for his work on elucidating the anatomical and biochemical basis of short-term and long-term memory. He had started his training in psychiatry in the early 1960s by undergoing a personal analysis, virtually a sine qua non for aspiring American psychiatrists of that era. However, his unquenchable curiosity about the manner in which the brain records and retrieves memories led him to abandon his analysis and spend the rest of his career as an experimental neurologist, first studying a shell-less marine snail and then mice.

His remarkable progress in unravelling the complexities of memory is unfolded here in a collection of eight essays published over 30 years, each preceded by a commentary from a colleague. If, like me, you have not read a neurological paper since qualifying in psychiatry, these essays

will open your eyes to the impressive advances made at the molecular, cellular and systemic level in understanding one of the salient functions of the brain. Kandel writes clearly and with a generous use of illustrations, but for the uninitiated, mastering the material presented is intellectually demanding at times.

The title of the book is misleading: no more than 1% of the text deals with psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Kandel speculates about the relevance of his experimental findings to psychiatry and psychoanalysis early in the book and I then held my breath in expectation of a revelatory exposition in the last chapter, but it was not to be found there, nor in the Afterword, entitled enticingly 'Psychotherapy and the single synapse revisited'. He believes that psychotherapy and psychoanalysis can be placed on a scientific footing by applying to them the methods of neurobiology, which have been so productive in his hands. A few quotations will convey the flavour of his thinking:

'The next step is to incorporate components of a psychoanalytic perspective into the modern biology of the mind and to create a unified view . . .'

'We need to put psychotherapy on a scientific basis and to explore its biological consequences, using imaging and other empirical means of evaluation. In this way, we may be able to explore which form of psychotherapy is most effective for different categories of patients.'

'As the resolution of brain imaging increases, it should eventually permit quantitative evaluation of the outcome of psychotherapy.'

In my view these statements were misguided at the time they were written and have been overtaken by methodological advances in evaluating talking therapies, including psychoanalysis. However, psychoanalysis poses stubborn challenges for evaluation because of its aims to change an individual's internal world and quality of relationships. In this respect, Kandel betrays an ambivalence with regard to his claims for neurobiology. He believes that if psychoanalysis is to survive, it can only do

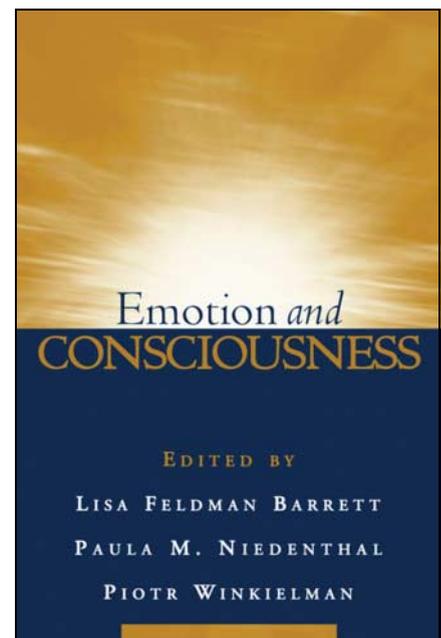
so in the context of an empirical psychology, informed by imaging techniques, neuroanatomical methods, and human genetics. On the other hand, he concedes that a biological analysis might not prove to be the optimal level or even an informative level of analysis for many aspects of group or individual behaviour, an opinion I strongly endorse.

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Emotion and Consciousness

Edited by L. Feldman Barrett, P.M. Niedenthal & P. Winkielman. New York: Guilford Press. 2005. 420pp. £35.00 (hb). ISBN 159385188X



The book is a collection of work by 31 authors, from 25 university departments of psychology, the majority in the USA but a third international. It is an up-to-date and rich review of the theories of emotion and brings together some of the diverse areas of neuropsychological research that they are based upon. This book will recommend itself to anyone interested in neuropsychology, particularly because of its focus on emotion, which as an area of research has been rather neglected in favour of cognition. It brings together in one volume the diverse areas of research in the field, showing some of the commonality and

progress towards a large-scale theory of emotion.

Some readers may feel a little daunted by the wealth of experimental data described if they like me are not often immersed in the language of neuropsychological research. It is well worth persevering, though, as the book is well edited and the research data in each chapter are succinctly reviewed. This is linked to a functional model of the mind and brain, giving added insight into the nature of emotions. The sense of being daunted by the subject fluctuated with fascination for other reasons. As the understanding of our neuropsychology grows it reveals the vastly complex levels of processing that the brain achieves and thus how we, our minds and personalities, are an emergent property of this functioning. We cannot possibly be conscious of more than a fraction of this processing and as a consequence are further from being the masters of our own destiny we often believe we are. There is convincing psychological evidence presented to show that we can both perceive the emotions of others and respond emotionally ourselves in ways we are not aware consciously of doing. Furthermore, how this is achieved is beginning to be demonstrated by functional studies of the brain, leading to mapping of the neural pathways involved. Slowly, one can see our understanding of brain functioning, rather than just anatomy, growing, although it may have rather startling consequences for who we think and feel we are.

Throughout the book, as the title suggests, the theme of what constitutes emotion and its relationship to consciousness is explored; cognition and emotion, unconscious emotional processing and perspectives on the conscious–unconscious debate. Each chapter has a box in which the different author is asked the scope of their proposed model and the way in which they use the term emotion; how they define conscious, unconscious and awareness, and whether their model deals with these terms and their interaction. One chapter deals with the theory of embodiment which suggests that our emotional knowledge is grounded and inseparable from our bodily reactions, our somatosensory and motor states. Our perception of others and our own feelings, as well as more conceptual tasks of emotional knowledge, involves re-enactment in the body. The mind is not separate from the body and nor would it

appear to be from other mind–bodies. Other chapters go on to present the evidence that we can detect the emotional states of others by recognising particular cues visually or aurally, and respond at rates that surpass our abilities to be aware of this. Yet this perception will influence our ongoing processing, our thoughts and actions. Unbeknown to us, we mirror the body language of others equally quickly, and this may be integral to understanding their states of mind.

I think this book will be of value to clinicians. As psychiatrists our clinical work involves us in helping patients to achieve a greater awareness of how their problems are dictated by their emotional lives; the influence that their emotional lives, both conscious and unconscious, have on their thoughts, actions and reactions to others. I think in the specialty of psychiatry, by its nature, we struggle with a whole range of human philosophical and scientific conundrums. Yet here, often as not, mind and body or thought and emotion struggle for some kind of supremacy. Psychiatry could be left impoverished by this struggle or alternatively be enriched by continually trying to integrate and rework our models of human life. So I think this book makes interesting and challenging reading.

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Insight in Psychiatry

By Ivana S. Markova. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005. 324pp. £50.00 (hb). ISBN 0521825180

Over the past 15 years there has been a wealth of research investigating the nature of insight in psychiatric and neurological disorders. Insight, at a clinical level, refers to the extent to which a patient is aware of their illness, their symptoms, how they interpret them, whether they comply with treatment, to name but a few aspects. Insight is therefore key to patient management and prognosis, yet intriguingly, as Markova explains, research is often inconclusive, sometimes even contradictory in its findings, and there is little concordance in how researchers conceptualise and assess insight.

The burgeoning literature on the subject of insight in various patient groups reflects its clinical importance and interest to researchers, yet few volumes have appeared that aim to explore research findings across neurological as well as psychiatric groups, ask why findings are so often not replicated, and then explore possible reasons for this.

The book is arranged in two sections with the first addressing the history and evolution of the meaning of insight, and how different schools of science and philosophy have sought to conceptualise its nature. Most research investigating insight has concentrated on schizophrenia, dementia and patients with brain injury. Accordingly, there follows an invaluable and concise summary of empirical investigations into insight in each of these patient groups. The reader is, as is intended, left feeling that despite a long history of investigation into how patients may lack insight into their respective disorders, few hard facts can be drawn. However, what is missing is consideration of insight in the dynamic tradition as empirical research in this area is lacking.

The second half of the book takes place on a much more abstract level and focuses on the author's own conceptualisation of insight which can, it is proposed, explain this high degree of inconsistency within the literature. While Markova draws many useful distinctions, for example, between 'awareness' and 'insight', and between different 'objects' of insight in different clinical populations, this section may prove too theoretical and insufficiently succinct for the average reader. However, despite being theoretically complex, Markova is successful in urging the reader to consider the critical importance of determining the object at which insight is directed, and how the object determines the phenomenon of insight.

As a whole, this book succeeds in making the reader aware of the complex nature of insight, and the conceptual and methodological problems that are associated with trying to assess it, while providing a framework that aims to resolve the causes of the inconsistencies in empirical findings.

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