

During Two Thousandth Years We Were Looking For the Psyche in A Wrong Place (Ideas Live Their Own Life)

You will never resolve a problem if you think like those who created it.

A. Einstein

Reshetnikov Mikhail

MD, PhD, Professor, the Meritorious Scientist of the Russia, the East-European Psychoanalytic Institute (University), Rector, the Honorary Professor of the Sigmund Freud University (Vienna, Austria), Russia, St. Petersburg
E-mail: veip@yandex.ru

Abstract: In this paper, traditional views on the relationship between mental activity and the brain activity are reviewed, and the hypothesis of brain as the biological interface, which was suggested by the author in 2008, is developed. Approaches to research of the psyche in the areas of physiology, psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry are summarized, and their implications to therapy of patients with mental disorders are analysed. The author substantiates non-material theory of the psyche and outlines its historical prerequisites.

Keywords: the biological interface, information, the brain, the nerves, the psyche, mental disorders, the brain structures, the psychic structures, social programming.

Citation: Reshetnikov Mikhail. 2018. During Two Thousandth Years We Were Looking For the Psyche in A Wrong Place (Ideas Live Their Own Life). International Journal of Current Innovations in Advanced Research, 1(4): 83-88.

Copyright: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. **Copyright©2018;** Reshetnikov Mikhail.

Introduction

In the age of information, our ideas about human psyche are important for all aspects of social life. Our perspective on the psyche influences not only therapy of mental disorders but also social processes.

In the last two thousand years this perspective was based on Hippocrates' hypothesis that all psychic processes reside in the brain. This hypothesis was accepted by such outstanding scientists as Wilhelm Wundt (2007), Ivan Sechenov (2015), Ivan Pavlov (1951) and many others. The only scientist who said that the psyche is an epiphenomenon as early as in 1895 was Sigmund Freud. But he was not heard (Freud, 2005).

Later this hypothesis by Hippocrates, which became the mainstream scientific doctrine, has been repeatedly updated. There were attempts to find the psyche in cerebral cortex, gyros, sub-cortex, conditioned reflex, electrical activity of the brain, and finally—what a miracle!—it was found in the synaptic cleft. These hypotheses led to tragic consequences for medical science.

It is amazing that for two thousand years scientists have not noticed the misunderstanding of terms: they were speaking about the psyche and its therapy but tried to study and treat the brain.

Misconceptions in medicine

Misconceptions are inevitable in any science. However, misconceptions in medicine have certain specific characteristics. What are they? Hypotheses about the psyche, after they are formulated, immediately lead to some speculations about psychopathology. And these theories of psychopathology would immediately be implemented into practice of therapy and even surgery aimed at treatment of mental disorders. We should admit that millions of people became objects of these experiments. Anatomic approach to so-called psychic structures led to implementation of lobotomy and dissection of corpus callosum; idea of the electrical activity resulted in thousands of experiments with electroconvulsive treatment; and recent biochemical theories gave birth to a new branch of chemical industry, that is, psychopharmacology, the main target of which is the synaptic cleft. So, mental disorders are treated with psychopharmacology, this treatment is aimed at neurotransmitters in the synaptic cleft, and in this way is supposed to reach the psyche.

What unites all these outstanding scientists, from Hippocrates to our contemporaries? It is a very powerful and tempting wish to find a material substrate of the psyche. Let me stress that they do not mean material structures, on which the psyche is based, but rather material substrate of the psyche. This was a misconception from the very beginning, as I will show now.

Proof of the hypothesis

In 2008 I suggested a hypothesis that contradicts the abovementioned traditional views and describes the brain as a biological interface (Reshetnikov, 2008; Reshetnikov, 2011; Reshetnikov, 2017a). This hypothesis draws a parallel between the brain and computer “Hardware”, on the one hand, and the psyche and computer “Software”, on the other. The processes of language acquisition, education and knowledge transmission are considered a kind of social programming. As in the technical systems, this programming requires a certain language. Psychic activity was considered a kind of informational exchange which functions only in the society, which is a global network. Let me remind you well-known saying by Lacan that the baby is born into the bath of the language, or, in contemporary terms, the infant’s psyche is initially connected to the informational network of the society.

This hypothesis, developed in 2008, also suggested that the role of the brain will be reconsidered in time, and in the new perspective it will be assigned a rather modest role of a link between the ideal and the real, or, in contemporary terms, a biological interface.

We receive information, rework and verify information, which is the essence of psychic processes. Currently, these processes can be studied only by self-observation or observation of their indirect manifestations, such as speech and ideomotor responses. However, we should not forget that thoughts and speech are governed by completely different laws. What we think differs from what we say much more often than we know.

Academic science on information

Further development of this non-material theory of the psyche (Reshetnikov, 2017b; Reshetnikov, 2018a; Reshetnikov, 2018b) was related to a very important fact that has been for a long time neglected by psychologists, physiologists and psychiatrists. The contemporary

academic science characterizes information as a nonmaterial factor. Let me remind you that the founder of cybernetics Norbert Winner explained that information is neither energy nor matter; information is information (Winner, 1968).

However, any information, although it is not material, acquires some qualitative and quantitative characteristics. It can be neutral, emotionally intense, truthful, false and so on. However, all these characteristics appear only for a perceiving subject, and the same information can stir different psychic reactions in different subjects. Let us remember 9\11, which resulted in mourning in the USA and joyful crowds in Livia. Information does not exist without a perceiving subject.

Misconceptions distorting scientific truth

Widely spread idea of the brain as the repository of psychic functions led to many misconceptions that pervade our everyday speech, and in science they led to the overload with the outdated theories. People use such phrases as “it’s getting on my nerves” although nerves are just transmitters, or “this idea got stuck in my head” although it is mind rather than head etc. Laymen and even scientists completely identify the nervous and the psychic. It is surprising how often I can see phrases like “the brain recognized”, “the brain sent an order”, “the brain analyzed” and so on in works of contemporary scientists. But, metaphorically speaking, it is not a computer which remembers something, which finds, calculates or analyses something, it is a nonmaterial program, without which the computer is just a piece of metal, just as the brain without the psyche is just a biological substrate, just a tissue.

Contemporary humanitarian science neglects crucial differences between the nervous system and the psyche. There are a few such differences, and the main of them is the following: the healthy psyche is able to differentiate imaginary stimuli from real ones. The nervous system can react to them both in the same way. This phenomenon is used in all techniques of suggestion and autosuggestion.

Psychopathology and psychopharmacology

It seems that we have not clearly differentiated two types of psychopathology and two completely different approaches to its treatment. These are:

1. Psychopathology resulting from organic damage of the brain: sclerotic change, oncological disease and so on. The brain as the carrier of information is damaged. Metaphorically speaking, the hardware of computer is broken. In this case, the damaged area of the brain can be easily localized, even on the basis of external manifestations, and approaches of biological medicine are absolutely adequate: we should treat the brain.

2. The second type of psychopathology includes all cases resulting from informational damage to the psyche: In this case, a nonmaterial factor (for instance, an individually important psychic trauma) damages another nonmaterial factor, the normally functioning psyche, like a computer virus (which is information) damages normally functioning software. The most vivid example is the so-called poisoning of pupils in a few schools in Chechnya by a paralyzing gas in September to December 2005. Under closer inspection, it appeared to be a case of psychic infection with false ideas, which can be called an informationally contracted disease.

In contrast to the first type, mental disorders in this case depend on individual specific of the subject and vary from slight dysphoria to severe autism or paranoia. Their therapy should

consist of informational influence on damaged structures, which are psychic structures rather than brain structures.

Chemical influence on the brain, which can be compared with the hardware, will not bring any results. Psychic contents will stay unchanged. It is similar to attempts to get rid of a computer virus by pouring acid or alkaline onto the computer.

It is not a negative attitude to psychopharmacology, and it will be a mistake to deny its achievements. I am not against psychopharmacology, I am against its ungrounded prescription and prolonged, isolated and uncontrolled use.

Social programming of the psyche does not mean that we are some sort of biorobots. Free will exists anyway. The other difference is that information, which damages the normally functioning psyche, can come from outside, like a computer virus, or created by the psyche itself, as false ideas, anxieties, doubts, which become self-traumatizing factors.

Additional arguments supporting this theory

This theory can be supported by a few more arguments. Studies of feral children (Lubovsky, 1978; Langmeier and Matejček, 1984) also known as Mowgli, show that normal human psyche cannot develop without a social environment, that is, if the child's brain is not programmed by a human language. It leads to the conclusion that the healthy brain is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for development and adequate functioning of human psyche; the language programming is also required.

In some of these cases, which are well known in psychology, feral children could communicate only with wolves or dogs. They lived for a long time with animals, so they imitated behaviour of these "adopted parents", and it was later impossible for psychologists and rehabilitation doctors to correct this behaviour.

The second group of additional arguments

It is important to mention works by Alexander Luria, especially his "Small Book of the Large Memory" (Luria, 1968). In this book he described thirty years of his observations of a mnemonist, a person who worked as a journalist and whose pathology was related to his inability to forget. In this study, Luria shows that human psyche functions as a contemporary video recorder (which did not exist at that time). The main idea of the book is the following: the psyche records everything which an individual has ever seen or heard. Fortunately, we do not remember everything.

In the end of this book, the author writes that the mnemonist suddenly remembered (not learnt but remembered) Aramean language, which was a language of international communication, *lingua franca*, in the XII century BC-II century AD). The mnemonist not only remembered this dead language but also found and read ancient manuscripts written in it. It suggests that there are some special mechanisms, by which informational traces of previous generations can be erased or restored.

Another Freud's follower, Otto Petzl, in his classical experiments on subliminal perception Godfrua (1996) proved that the eye sees more and the ear hears more than we perceive at the conscious level, and these subliminal stimuli can influence our conscious reactions, judgements, ideas, motivation, behaviour and decisions.

One more factor supporting the informational theory of the psyche is recent studies of mirror neurons by (Rizzolatti *et al.*, 1996; 2006). The outstanding researcher paid attention to rather common phenomena of the everyday life. In particular, he noticed that two people in communication might remember similar ideas or use the same words. Later Rizzolatti proved the existence of mirror neurons in his unique psychophysiological experiments. These neurons transmit information and can also receive nonverbalized information (that is, thoughts); they function as receivers that transform nonmaterial information into a sort of radio waves.

To support this theory, I would also use clinical observations of patients who could not speak their mother tongue but eagerly communicated with their therapists in a different language—that is, one of the programs of psychic functioning was switched off and the other switched on. The first case of this kind was, as we know, described by Sigmund Freud in “The Studies of Hysteria” in 1895 (Freud, 2005).

Some colleagues have considered the nonmaterial theory of psyche a discovery, which will make a qualitative change in existing approaches to psychopathology, and I appreciate their esteem, although I think that such a change will take a long time.

Other colleagues, who got acquainted with this theory and gave positive responses, asked me: “Is it possible to link it to the theory of reflexes and neurophysiology?” Yes, it is possible. But it is not recommendable. It will be the same as a marriage between a hundred-year-old woman and a new-born baby; this marriage will not be productive at all. A new idea has been born, and it has to develop and to live its own life ...

References

1. Freud, S. 2005. Studies of Hysteria-SPb: The East-European Psychoanalytic Institute, 454 pp.
2. Godfrua, Zh. 1996. What is Psychology, 2 volumes, 2nd edition. Volume 1: Translated from French.— M.: Mir, 496 pp.
3. Langmeier, I. and Matejček, Z. 1984. Mental deprivation in childhood. Prague: Avicenum, 1984].
4. Lubovsky, V.I. 1978. Development of verbal regulation of actions in children (in norm and pathology).-Moscow: Pedagogika, 224 p.
5. Luria, A.R. 1968. The Small Book about Large Memory. M., 1968.
6. Pavlov I.P. 1951. Physiology and psychology in studying high nervous activity of animals. In the book Pavlov, I.P. Complete edition.—Moscow, 1951. V. III, book I, 323-340 pp.
7. Reshetnikov, M.M. 2008. Mental Disorder. St-Petersburg: The East-European Psychoanalytic Institute., 272 pp.
8. Reshetnikov, M.M. 2011. Critical Post-Materialism in Psychology and Psychiatry. Neur. Bullet., Volume XLIII (2): 66-69 pp.

9. Reshetnikov, M.M. 2017a. Problem of Relation between Brain and Mind in Physiology, Medicine and Psychology. J. Psych. Psychiat. Disor., 1(6): 313-316.
10. Reshetnikov, M.M. 2017b. What is the Psyche? What are we Curing? J. Anthropol., 6(3): 11-15.
11. Reshetnikov, M.M. 2018a. What Happened with the Search for the Material Basis of the Psyche?. J. COJ Rev. Res., 1(3): 1-7.
12. Reshetnikov, M.M. 2018b. Non-Material Theory of the Psyche. Int. J. Psych. Res., 1(1): 1-7.
13. Rizzolatti, G., Fadiga, L., Gallese, V. and Fogassi, L. 1996. Premotor cortex and the recognition of motor actions. Cognit. Brain Res., 3: 131-141.
14. Rizzolatti, G., Fogassi, L. and Gallese V. 2006. Mirrors in the Mind. Scientific American Band., 295 (5): 30-37.
15. Sechenov I.M. 2015. Reflexes of the brain. M.: AST., 352 p.
16. Winner, N. 1968. Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine. M.: Sovetskoe Radio, 325 p.
17. Wundt, W. 2007. An Introduction to Psychology. M.: KomKniga, 168 p.