

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!


Soul = Brain ?



Question: If our consciousness comes from the soul, and not the brain, then why do brain states affect consciousness? For example, why does damage to the speech center of the brain make the person unable to speak?

Answer: Consciousness originates from the soul, but manifests through the brain.

To understand this, let's consider three crucial questions:

1. If the brain produces consciousness, then how? The brain is incredibly sophisticated in its structure, with about 10 billion neurons, each of which has about ten thousand connections with other neurons. Still, all these neurons being made of non-conscious molecules are themselves non-conscious. Their interactions lead merely to the variation of their electrochemical states, which don't produce or even refer to consciousness. The claim that matter can produce something – consciousness – that experiences matter is beyond not only experimental demonstration but also theoretical explanation. That's why Noble Laureate Sir John Eccles, stated, "I believe that there is a fundamental mystery in my existence, transcending any bio-logical account of the development of my body (including my brain)." 
2. If the brain produces consciousness, then how does the consciousness maintain its continuity and integrity despite the continuous death of brain cells? Each day, we lose an average of one thousand neurons in the brain. How could a speaking robot continue to speak if the hard disk containing its speech program were getting continuously deleted? That's why ISKCON scientist, Dr Michael Cremo, eloquently states:



That consciousness and its mental contents can maintain their integrity in the face of such massive random disruptions in the brain circuitry that supposedly creates consciousness requires quite a leap of faith. It is more reasonable to suppose that the unitary consciousness of a living entity is an irreducible feature of reality and that it simply uses the brain as an instrument."

3. Could the brain be merely transmitting and not producing consciousness? This view, postulated by the renowned psychologist William James, is illustrated through way a prism transmits light. When a prism is damaged, the light passed through it gets distorted. Similarly, when the brain gets damaged, the consciousness passed through it gets impeded. Let's consider another example of a businessperson using a computer to keep inventory. If the computer gets damaged, he would be impaired in his stock-keeping. Similarly, if the brain is akin to a computer-like instrument for the consciousness, then the consciousness would be impaired in expressing itself. No wonder, another Noble Laureate, Dr Wilder Penfield, after four decades of research, concluded, "The brain is a computer But it is programmed by something that is outside itself." That something is the soul, which the *Bhagavad-gita* (2.17) states "pervades the body with consciousness."

