



Who's in Charge: You, Brain, Mind, or Willpower?

Did “the devil” really make you do it?

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Brain References



5-19

Highway traffic emerges from and is created by vehicles, but highway traffic ultimately constrains vehicles, which created the traffic in the first place



Neuroscientists agree that the brain is a physical entity that enables the mind; the physiological *brain* enables the *mind* in a way we don't understand and in so doing, it follows physical laws of the universe just like other matter ... The *mind*, which is somehow generated by the physical processes of the brain, constrains the brain, which created the mind in the first place



—Michael S. Gazzaniga, MD *Who's In Charge?*



You can “see” the brain physically but you cannot “see” the mind; it is hidden somewhere in the physical brain

Because of this, dysfunctions of the mind are both puzzling and sometimes scary for humans (you can see a broken bone, the results of an stomach ulcer, etc.)

What the mind learns can impact the brain positively or negatively, which makes the human different from any other creature brains on the planet... and maybe in the universe

Behavioral dilemma:

For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do

—Apostle Paul, Romans 7:15

**It's not that I do not know what to do, it's that
I do not do what I know! —Confucious**



Decisional dilemma:

Who's in charge: You, Brain, Mind, or Willpower?

Did the devil really make you do it?

This is way more complicated than many would believe!

The brain is a highly specialized physical system with millions of local processors making important decisions and critical neuronal networks distributed throughout; but it is also a functional system although there is no one boss and no central command center that keeps all other brain systems in line



Typically we think of the brain as being in charge of some things such as heart rate, breathing rate, digestion, and so on—but those functions also can be impacted by the mind, by what you are thinking and feeling

Several bridges connect the two cerebral hemispheres so they can exchange information with each other—two of these are the Corpus Callosum and the Anterior Commissure

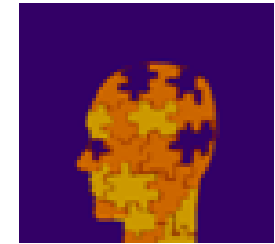


The hemispheres are connected to a common stem, however, so both halves sleep and wake at the same time (unlike dolphins and birds)



Appears to be only one integrated spatial attention system that allows the selection of some stimuli over others

The brain is not designed to multitask; it is an illusion as attention cannot be distributed to two spatially disparate locations--



Empathizing female brains appear to multitask but this is an illusion; they can do rapidly alternating shifts of attention but this can increase mistakes and accidents

Simultasking is a possibility for systemizing male brains with its two somewhat independently operating hemispheres (as long as each task is directed primarily by a different hemisphere)

The brain “thinks it knows” or tries to figure things out—although no brain knows everything!

Have you ever tried telling your brain:



- **Don't think about that**
- **Don't eat more pie**
- **Don't laugh**
- **Don't say that**
- **Don't be nervous**
- **Don't cry**
- **Don't smoke**

Did it do what you told it to do consistently?

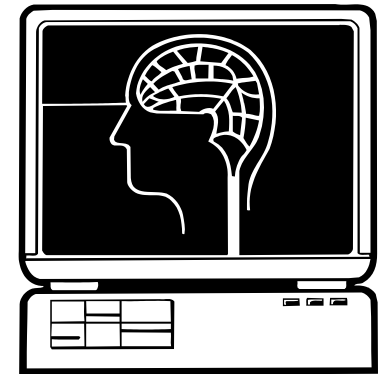
Most likely NOT!

**85% chance of following positive instructions—
but not negative one**

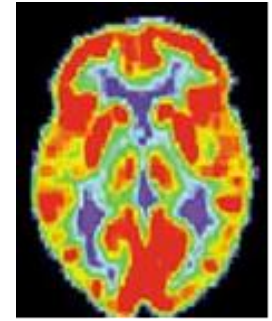
fMRI studies: The outcomes of an inclination can be encoded in brain activity up to TEN seconds before it enters conscious awareness

In a sense the brain has thought about the inclination and started acting on it before the person is conscious of the thought

By looking at the scan, researchers can make fairly accurate predictions about what the person is actually going to do



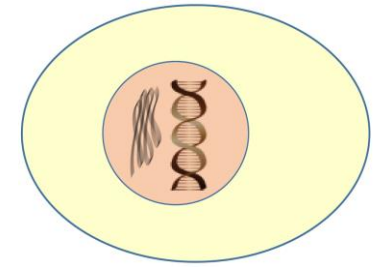
You are not responsible for every thought that crosses your brain...



You are responsible for those that occur based on what you have exposed your mind to...

What do you read, listen to, watch, play, discuss, think about? Your subconscious mind processes what you take in—whether or not it comes to conscious awareness—and prompts dreams, actions, behaviors, choices . . .

Cellular memories from biological ancestors can prompt thoughts (choose your life partner carefully, especially if you plan to have children!)



So where does free choice come into this equation?



Once a thought comes to your mindful awareness, free choice may consist of making a decision to hang onto the thought and follow through on a behavior or choosing to think a different thought and selecting a different behavior to exhibit

Whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—think (meditate) on these things

—Philippians 4:8



That admonition does not come out of a vacuum although it has taken centuries for research to explain some things

When you do something once, your brain lays down a neuron pathway in case you want to do that something again—be careful what you choose once because it is always easier to do it a second time!

PET Scans: Patterns in the brain were recorded during actual handling of a 3-dimensional wire grid and again later on during recollection of the event only

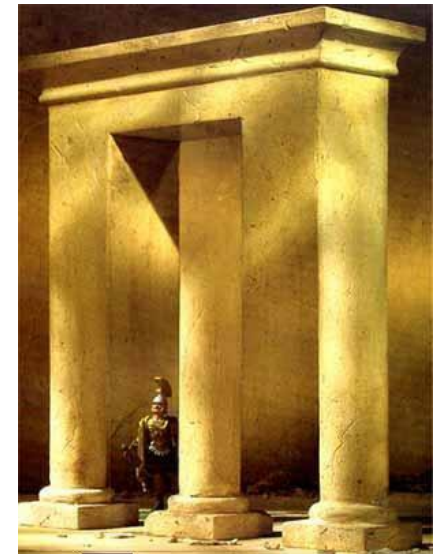


The activity patterns in the brain were the same whether the experience was actual or virtual—likely due to mirror neurons that fire when they observe something externally or internally as if you were doing it yourself

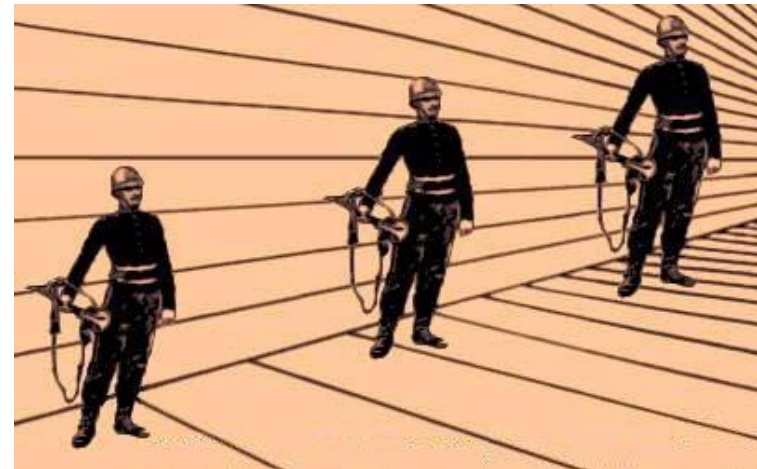
Scripture says if you look lustfully after another person you have already committed the act in your heart —Matt 5:28

The word *illusion* comes from the Latin verb *illudere* meaning, "to mock"— a blatant example of brain tricking you into perceiving something differently than it exists in physical reality—in essence you “believe a lie”

When your visual system is tricked into constructing illusion, even when you know your brain has been tricked, the illusion remains



Some illusions show you one thing in a picture, while someone else sees something entirely different in the same picture



Willpower is a function of the prefrontal cortex behind your forehead (may be exclusively a human part of the brain)

Willpower rarely works well (if at all) to deprive yourself of something you already do for gratification (e.g., stopping a habit that gives your brain a dopamine reward even though it results in negative consequences)

Willing yourself NOT to do something creates a picture in working memory and both conscious and nonconscious minds think about it constantly, which usually increases the behavior



Willpower is designed to give you energetic perseverance to attain a goal—to develop a new behavior

There is a common default position: the way of least resistance



There is also a decisional position: To will and to act according to God's good purpose

—Philippians 2:13

This involves personal choice and willpower...

Always tell your brain what you want to have happen as if it is happening right now—stop talking about what you do not want to have happen



**Use your “first name” and the pronoun “you”:
“Arlene, you are drinking water 30 min before eating”**

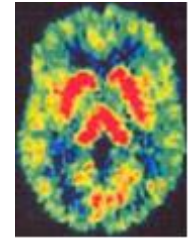
This puts a picture in working memory in the pre-frontal cortex that is perceived by the subconscious as well as the conscious mind, and then activate willpower to follow through on the choice -- The combination is powerful!

So, WHO is in charge?

Brain? Unlikely. It can be hijacked (by fear, anxiety, depression, addictions, phobias), constrained by the mind, and damaged by lifestyle



Mind? Unlikely. It was created by the brain and can be overridden by it and by you



Willpower? Unlikely. It works in specific ways only, may be underdeveloped, ignored, neutralized, and its skills must be honed and implemented by you



You are in charge . . . and it's all about choice



Using brain, mind, and willpower, you can:

- **Pre-program your brain and mind through a positive mindset, appropriate self-talk style, affirmations, and willpower**
- **Choose the thoughts you hang onto and the behaviors you exhibit (the devil did not *make* you do it!)**