

THE WATERDOWN REVIEW

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WHAT IS THE MIND?

Physiology of the Brain Has Its Mysteries.

What is the mind? Nobody really knows. A physiologist would tell you that your mental processes represent the co-ordinated functioning of nerve cells in the brain.

The explanation, however, is inadequate and unsatisfactory.

One hears a great deal about the "gray matter" which forms a sort of envelope for the brain, and which contains a great many millions of the above-mentioned nerve cells. But how about the whitish mass which it surrounds?

The answer is that this mass is composed chiefly of fibers which emanate like rootlets from the nerve cells, and which are interlaced and tangled together with an amazing complexity. These fibers and their supporting structures (with small scattered masses of "gray matter") make up what may be called the body of the brain.

It is thought that the nerve cells in the brain of a human being number something like 200,000,000. Their ramifying rootlets connect them one with another, and send out branches which extend to the most remote portions of the physical anatomy.

It is through the medium of their interlaced fibers that the nerve cells of the brain are able to work together harmoniously. To them we owe associations of ideas and memories, the ability to put concepts together and form judgments—to exercise, in a word, all the faculties of consecutive thought and reason.

Although so much has been learned within recent years about the physiology of the brain, only a small beginning has been made in the exploration of that strange and wonderful realm. The very complexity of it seems almost to defy analysis. We know that the fore-brain (made up of two convoluted masses called the cerebral hemispheres) is the main seat of intelligence. Certain definite areas of the "cortex" have been proved to exercise motor control over certain parts of the muscular system of the body. The physiologist will tell you that the centre of visual perception is at the back of the brain, and he can point out in like manner the areas governing hearing, smell, taste.

But he is unable to go very much further. Ask, for instance, what is the business of the little brain called the "cerebellum," behind the ears, which is a distinct structure. He will tell you that it seems to govern locomotion, but that is about all he can say. The fore-brain is connected with the cerebellum by the mid-brain; directly in front of the cerebellum is a smaller mass called the "pons," and beneath the latter is the "medulla oblongata," an elongated body which tapers downward into the spinal cord.

The whole affair, including the medulla oblongata, is in effect the brain, and the spinal cord, through which a core of "gray matter" extends, is practically a prolongation thereof.

Strung along the spinal cord are small masses, mainly composed of the same sort of "gray matter" that is found in the brain, which are called "ganglia," and which are in effect little brains. All through the body such ganglia are distributed, manifestly controlling local activities under direction from the brain proper. It is as if the brain proper were a powerhouse, employing the spinal cord as a main transmission line and the ganglia as substations.

The analogy, indeed, may be considered very close, inasmuch as nerve energy, according to the theory now accepted, is really electricity, and the nervous system a highly complex and wonderfully efficient electrical installation.

Double-ended Wrench.

Double-ended wrenches are popular, especially among autoists, for their sturdy simplicity, as compared with the awkwardness of the ordinary monkey wrench, says Popular Mechanics Magazine. Even the latter's advantage of adjustability now has been conferred upon the former, for a two-ended wrench that handles ten sizes of nuts has been placed in the market. One jaw at each end is slidably mounted, with a pin moving in a slot, and locks in place against a ratchet edge. The body, which is seven and three-fourths inches long and three-eighths inch thick, has positions for the various sizes, from one-fourth to seven-eighths inch, marked upon it.

Where the owner of animals wishes to send specimens for examination he will find it to his advantage to consult his veterinarian, as he is in a position to advise as to what material should be submitted and how best to send it.—Dr. Ronald Gwatkin, Ontario Veterinary College, Toronto.

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