

MIND and LOVE – The Human Experience (279 pages, published 2010)

The new scientific paradigm of ‘embodied mind’ or ‘situated cognition’ is percolating into popular mind science, but its fundamentals, autopoiesis and structural coupling, have never been explained in a thoroughly readable - yet accurate - way. Popular versions of social neuroscience are not yet aligned with these principles.

In this book, I have combined the paradigm shift in biology initiated by Maturana and Varela with the recent rush of ideas in social neuroscience to create what I hope is a refreshingly new explanation of the way our mind works in our everyday experience. This reveals the most common blind spots in what we thought we knew about our mind. These blind spots are spoiling our individual lives and harming our prospects for peaceful co-existence and care of our environment.

For example, it is not widely known, in a practical sense, that:

- meaning is emotional-visceral before it is conceptual-propositional.
- meaning can't be transferred from one person to another.
- meaning can be shared by means of emotional congruence.
- decision-making is not simply due to conscious awareness.
- free will exists only as we experience present moments in the context of a larger whole.
- knowledge and intelligence are reified and misconstrued, to our social detriment.
- not knowing is as important as knowing; our quality of life depends on how we relate to the unknown.
- self-transcendence leads to the greatest self-satisfaction.

This is a scientific explanation of mind, leavened with process philosophy, also invoking spirituality without any religious connotation.

The essence of it is that human beings, as living systems, need a mind that connects us to the larger world with our individual identities preserved; and the biological phenomenon I call love is crucial for this process. Each momentary connection our mind makes leads us to the next. Quality of connection is what counts. Thus, we are leaving the ‘information age’ and moving, through an age of attention deficit, towards a greater awareness of the social imperative in our everyday lives.

Without mind and love we could not exist. Separateness is our problem – seeking union is our driving force – but we are necessarily limited in our ability to achieve this union. Our will and our ability to love flow side by side in an extraordinarily beautiful, but partly unrequited, quest.

Mind and love are conjunctive, quintessential elements of the human living system.

This new analysis of the way mind and life are synonymous distinguishes seven aspects of knowing across a spectrum of mind ranging from the physical to the spiritual – from the known to the unknown. Each of these aspects of knowing has a characteristic set of blind spots. At the midpoint of the spectrum, where the unknown begins to sway the known, we recognise the biological force that is love.

Love was, and is, the enabling force in the evolution of human beings; without love, our species could not have survived to this point. In the same way that babies develop a thinking human mind only as they are loved, *Homo sapiens* developed our social brain and mind through a history of neoteny, vulnerability and intimacy. Fear was another shaping force, particularly for our intellect. Indifference and apathy are the greatest threats to our survival. Love, alone, expands intelligence, loosens the neural patterns of addiction that bind us, and makes us uniquely human, amongst all living systems.

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Prelude

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elusive and extended mind, process philosophy and life experience

2 Blind Spots and Not Knowing

how mind connects us and why meaning is not transferable

3 Seeing and Hearing

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4 Proactive Perception

circular sensing, perceiving colours and bringing forth worlds

5 Explaining

objectivity, self-consciousness and what happens when we ignore the observer

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imagination, wholeness and the seven aspects of knowing

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keeping the human mind alive

Coda