



The Mind: Its Nature and Origin

Christiaan D. Van Der Velde

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When in 1823 Sigmund Freud published his structural id/ego/superego concept of the mind, he predicted that future scientific study would show that all mental experiences originate in the brain. Indeed, the extraordinary advances in neuroscience and brain-imaging technologies during the last three decades have indisputably established that the brain is involved in every mental activity.

However, we have yet to discover how electro-chemical activities in the brain produce or convert into mental events. Most theories have centered on Freud's claim that mental functions are ego functions. In this ambitious and deeply thoughtful work, psychiatrist Christiaan D. van der Velde presents the results of a different approach: the analysis of the origin, nature, and functionality of the common denominators of all mental events - our mental representations. While Freud conceived these to be products of the mind, Van der Velde's analysis disputes Freud's claim. Mental representations are actually autochthonously occurring phenomena, which originate as activated cerebral imprints of previously experienced visual percepts whose gestalts - or patterns - determine cognitive content. Each gestalt is accompanied by a sense of having experienced it previously. This sense of "knowing" cannot be explained by any physical process or function of the brain. By applying a new interpretation of the philosophical concept of dialectics the author describes cognition as an empirical - that is, purely experiential - epiphenomenon, which reflects the specific differences between internal images and actual visual percepts. Van der Velde concludes that mental representations (1) are not the products but the constituents of the mind and (2) enable us to explain the psychodynamics of all mental functions.

This cogent, incisive analysis by a leading psychotherapist and researcher in cognition provides much to ponder and many insights into the nature of the mind.

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