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Lonergan's Savant

Neural science has taken interest in savants who can do complex mathematical computations seemingly without mental effort. Without a comprehensive theory of the relationship between the mind and brain structure, some neural scientists such as Dr. V. S. Ramachandran reduce these savants' anomalous abilities to merely neurological fluctuations. Absent a coherent cognitional theory, a latent reductionism has gained momentum due to the overwhelming data which support that the physiological structure of the brain affects the mind. It is only very recently, however, that these scientists have come to recognize the mind's ability to affect the brain's configuration and so a polemical tension has emerged, for a reductionistic neurology cannot account for such research as Richard Davidson's in which meditating Buddhist monks altered the structure and function of their brains over tens of thousands of hours.

In this paper I employ Lonergan's theory of emergence to both take into account the necessary role that brain physiology plays as well as explain how it is possible for the mind to alter brain structure and function. Lonergan explains that, "There can be autonomous sciences of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology, because on each earlier level of systematization there are statistical residues that constitute the merely coincidental manifolds to be systematized on the next level. It follows that higher laws and higher schemes of recurrence cannot be deduced from lower laws and lower schemes of recurrence, for the higher is engaged in regulating what the lower levels leave as merely coincidental" (*Insight*, 631). In other words, there are various aspects of the psychological level that are not governed by the intelligible laws of that level. This 'coincidental manifold' is what is potentially ordered by the mind. Without this nuanced understanding of the relationship between neural physiology and the mind it is impossible to explain how brain structure can both affect and be affected by one's mind.