

# **Psychology is entirely physical**

**Taking the mind out of behavioural  
neuroscience**



Behavioural Neuroscience

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## PREFACE

This book is written for all health workers, particularly psychologists, psychiatrists, specialist physicians, neurologists, and students in these fields. The thrust of the book is that psychological phenomena, in illness and health, are manifestations of physical processes, no different from respiration, digestion, and motion. In like manner, psychological interventions are, in all respects, physical treatments.

For the general public, probably nothing is more interesting and fascinating than psychology, as we attempt to understand others and ourselves, and as we attempt to influence each other, (to change ourselves). Our everyday language is full of references to psychological concepts. We say things like, "Oh, that's just psychological". Furthermore, most, if not all, of our actions are directed at satisfying our psychological needs: we socialize, listen to music, pray, engage in or watch sport, seek adventures of all sorts, take alcohol and drugs, read books, help others, and so on. Even the pursuit of money, power, fame, notoriety, and security are ultimately the pursuit of psychological needs. Most psychology books focus on detailed and accurate *descriptions* of behaviour, but fall short of *explanations* of those behaviours. This book will be of interest to health workers and the general public alike because it goes beyond mere descriptions of behaviour and looks at the underlying biological mechanisms.

Joachim Mureriwa, January 2011

## ABSTRACT

The idea that the mind exists as an immaterial entity separate from the body is a myth. We perpetuate this myth by our continued use of the word "psychology", which literally means the study of the mind, soul or spirit. Contemporary psychologists do not study the mind or the soul. They study human and animal behaviour. This book addresses one of the most amazing blind-spots in psychology – the failure by psychologists to recognize that all the so-called psychological phenomena are, at all times and in all respects, physical, rather than mental or immaterial processes. To illustrate this point, the author attempts to show that concepts from physics, chemistry, and biology are necessary and sufficient to explain all behaviour. Behaviours are actions or motions, which, in terms of physics, imply force, energy, and matter. The book ends with a discussion of the implications for adopting a physicalist approach to all, and not just some, disciplines in psychology. One of the implications of this approach is that the word "psychology" itself should be discarded and replaced by a name such as "behavioural neuroscience". Adoption of a physical approach to behaviour has major implications for the training of psychologists and the positioning of the profession within society.