

Illness and Mind

Philosophy of Medicine and Man Volume 2

How does the human mind influence disease? The physician and philosopher Michael Imhof explores the question of how diseases are represented in the patterns of the neuronal networks of the brain and in what way consciousness processes can influence the development and course of diseases in recursive loops. Fundamental to this question is the representation of the neuronal systems of the central nervous system, starting at the level of individual neurons and extending to the cortical centers, as hierarchically organized systems of self-organizational processes that can be represented mathematically as attractors. These self-organizing neuronal processes interpenetrate each other in a nonlinear and nondeterministic dynamic; they are open to the future and highly creative. The central nervous system is organized into myriads of self-organizing processes from which semantic information, sensory and motor events, acts of consciousness, and emotions are generated. Starting from physical and systems theoretical approaches, the dynamic contexts and transitions between the material structures and processes of neuronal networks and the immaterial processes of consciousness and mind are presented in a way that has not been done before. On a strictly scientific approach it is possible in this way to open up new illuminating approaches to the brain-mind problem. On the basis of a deepened illumination of the concept of information and entropy, conclusive insights can be derived into the way in which consciousness processes arise and how they might affect disease processes in the body periphery. Moreover, a theory of mind is established against the background of evolutionary processes as a whole. The book thus breaks new scientific ground: a richly detailed and inspiring body of knowledge for medicine and philosophy.



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