

The New Science of Mind

September 10, 2013

The New York Times:

These days it is easy to get irritated with the exaggerated interpretations of brain imaging — for example, that a single fMRI scan can reveal our innermost feelings — and with inflated claims about our understanding of the biological basis of our higher mental processes.

Such irritation has led a number of thoughtful people to declare that we can never achieve a truly sophisticated understanding of the biological foundation of complex mental activity.

In fact, recent newspaper articles have argued that psychiatry is a “semi-science” whose practitioners cannot base their treatment of mental disorders on the same empirical evidence as physicians who treat disorders of the body can. The problem for many people is that we cannot point to the underlying biological bases of most psychiatric disorders. In fact, we are nowhere near understanding them as well as we understand disorders of the liver or the heart.

But this is starting to change.

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Aaron Beck, who pioneered the use of cognitive behavioral therapy, long insisted that psychotherapy has an empirical basis, that it is a science. Other forms of psychotherapy have been slower to move in this direction, in part because a number of psychotherapists believed that human behavior is too difficult to study in scientific terms.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)