

## A Few Notes on “emergent-interaction theory”, the new “dualism”, and the mind body problem:

With the emergence of the “brain sciences” during the last quarter of the last century biologically oriented psychologists came to accept the essentially “monistic” view of mind in relation to brain. “Epiphenomenalism” is one way to describe this position in that these psychologists were viewing mind as a simple byproduct of neural brain states. However, if the mind is indistinguishable from the brain’s biological processes, then consciousness—the subject matter of cognitive psychologists and humanists at least since the 1960s—must be eliminated from psychologists’ interest.

Roger Sperry (below right, 1913-1994) and Michael Gazzaniga (below left) challenged this narrow view of consciousness. In independent investigations these researchers discovered that surgically disconnecting the cerebral hemispheres created a duality of conscious experience in patients. Out of this research came a new perspective called the **emergent-interaction theory** of mind-brain relationships.

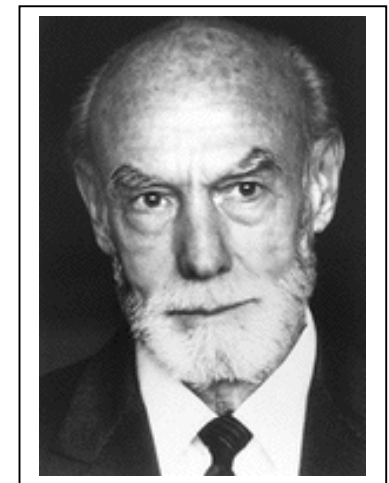


Michael Gazzaniga

The **emergent-interaction theory** asserts that brain activities give rise to mental states, but that these mental states are not the same as and are not reducible to brain states. Just the opposite, brain and mind *interact*, so just as the brain may act upon the mind, the mind influences the brain to govern, rule, and direct neural and chemical events. Ultimately, the conscious mind exerts decisive causal influence over the brain in directing and controlling behavior.

Many believe that this new form of “dualism” to be compatible with the perspectives of most psychologists today. The position unites science with our common experience. As Roger Sperry once put it:

The mind has been restored to the brain of experimental science ... Scientific theory has become squared finally with the impression of common experience: we do in fact use the mind to initiate and control our physical actions. (Sperry, 1987, p. 166)



Roger Sperry(1913-1994)