

Am I More than My Brain? – Neuroscience and Christian Faith

The human brain is one of the most complex objects in the known universe, and its incredible performance impacts every area of our lives. The question may arise: Am I nothing but my brain; am I more than my brain? Certainly, there are links between brain function and our personality. But does that show that we are purely material beings? Is consciousness only a function of the brain? Has neuroscience refuted the notion of free will and personal responsibility? Are religious faith and our concept of God just products of neuron function? What does the Bible teach about our brain and our soul? In this session, we will wrestle with these issues. These questions are not only scientifically interesting but have a deep impact on understanding our own identity as human beings.

Alexander Fink is Director of the Institute for Faith and Science (Institut für Glaube und Wissenschaft) in Marburg, Germany (www.iguw.de). He studied physics at the universities of Bayreuth and St. Andrews (UK) and received his PhD at the Institute for Biophysics at the University of Regensburg. After having worked as an industrial product manager, he became director of SMD graduates' ministry (Akademiker-SMD, the German branch of IFES) until 2014. His passion is the dialogue of science, faith, and worldviews, and has given apologetic lectures in Germany and other European countries. Since 2008 he has been a member of the ELF Steering Committee and has co-led the Scientists Network. He is editor of the "Begründet-glauben-Podcast" (www.begrundet-glauben.org) and has produced two documentary movies "Fascinating universe" and "More than my brain" which have been recommended by a German federal media centre for use in public schools. Together with his wife, Alexander enjoys raising his two children, leading a house group in his local church in which he regularly leads services and preaches. He also is the coach of a youth soccer team.

1. The fascinating human brain
 - Fun facts about the most complex object in the universe
2. Brain and personality
 - How a railway worker changed his personality after a brain accident and what that means
3. Is the brain just a computer?
 - Is AI able to produce conscious intelligent beings?
4. What is consciousness?
 - The qualia problem and why an all-knowing color-blind scientist can still learn something!
5. Do we have a free will?
 - Have the Libet experiments refuted that our will is free?
 - Why there is good reason that we can still claim to have freedom in our choices

6. Is God an illusion of our brain?
 - Persinger's God helmet and the interpretations
 - Why God will not go away

7. Is there consciousness without the brain?
 - What we can deduce from near-death experiences and what we can't

8. Summary: Three worldviews and their strengths and weaknesses
 - Reductive Materialism
 - Non-reductive Materialism
 - Dualism
 - ⇒ A biblical approach to incarnational dualism

9. Discussion

Literature:

- + Sharon Dirckx: "Am I Just My Brain?"
- + J.P. Moreland: "The Soul"
- + Thomas Nagel: "Mind and Cosmos"
- + Edward Feser: "Philosophy of Mind"
- + Gary Habermas, J.P. Moreland: "Beyond Death"
- + Wim Kayzer: "A Glorious Accident: Understanding Our Place in the Cosmic Puzzle"
- + Documentary movie: "More Than My Brain" by www.iguw.de (DVD in the ELF bookstore)
- Download: <https://www.visionvideo.com/mp4/501808V/more-than-my-brain-mp4-digital-download>
- + 7-part documentary series of "A Glorious Accident" from Dutch television channel VPRO, especially, the seventh part here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVrnn7QW6Jg>