



Biology of Freedom: Neural Plasticity, Experience, and the Unconscious

Francois Ansermet, Pierre Magistretti

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This groundbreaking book delivers a much needed bridge between the neurosciences and psychoanalysis. Freud hoped that the neurosciences would offer support for his psychoanalysis theories at some point in the future: both disciplines, after all, agree that experience leaves traces in the mind. But even today, as we enter the twenty-first century, all too many scientists and analysts maintain that each side has wholly different models of the origin and nature of those traces. What constitutes human experience, how does this experience shape us, and how, if at all, do we change our lives? Psychoanalysis and the neurosciences have failed to communicate about these questions, when they have not been frankly antagonistic. But, in *Biology of Freedom*, Francois Ansermet and Pierre Magistretti are at last breaking new ground. This fully illustrated account, rigorous yet lucid and entirely accessible, shows how the plasticity of the brain's neural network allows for successive inscriptions, transcriptions, and retranscriptions of experience, leading to the constitution of an inner reality, an unconscious psychic life unique to each individual. In what amounts to a paradigm shift based on the concept of plasticity, this elegant, seamless collaboration of a psychoanalyst and a neuroscientist bridges the gap between disciplines formerly believed to be incompatible. Ansermet and Magistretti have opened up new areas of exploration of the mind/body connection and profoundly new ways in which to understand the bodily underpinnings of personal freedom, identity, and change. Freedom of Biology came about through a meeting: a meeting of two domains, psychoanalysis and neurosciences. And a meeting of two people as well: a neurobiologist who had a personal psychoanalysis and a psychoanalyst open to what other fields can teach psychoanalysis. And, finally, a meeting based on a mutual observation, namely, that experience leaves a trace...This book will offer hypotheses for a model of the unconscious that integrates the recent findings of neurobiology with the foundational principles of psychoanalysis.'- From the Preface

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