



The Chemistry of Conscious States: How the Brain Changes Its Mind

By *J. Allan Hobson*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, Hobson sets forth a model of consciousness that posits brain and mind as an inseparable unity and, in self-help fashion, explains how to control one's "brain-mind" states to improve health, sleep, memory and learning ability. One fascinating implication of his theory is that dreaming and psychosis have much in common. Another is that abnormal modes like schizophrenia, depression, Alzheimer's disease and dementia result when neurochemical or physiological changes lead to a failure in one or more of our faculties-perception, emotion, orientation, memory, attention, energy. Hobson splices recent advances in cognitive neuroscience with his own dream research, episodes in the lives of his patients and his personal experiences, such as temporary amnesia due to a car accident. His exciting report holds equal interest for laypeople and scientists.

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From [Booklist](#)

As neurologists and psychologists find themselves on each other's turf, evidence supporting the theory that the brain and mind are inseparable grows in quantity and quality. Hobson, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, began his studies of various states of consciousness by comparing various forms of psychosis with dreams, his speciality. By analyzing the chemical properties associated with these strikingly similar states, he came to believe that we should refer to the unified and dynamic system percolating within our skulls as the brain-mind. Hobson articulates the logic behind this paradigm and explains the implications of studying consciousness from this perspective for both science and everyday life. Along the way, he provides his readers with some of the clearest descriptions yet of such crucial faculties as orientation, memory, perception, emotion, attention, and mood. As Hobson provides anecdotal examples to illustrate each brain-mind faculty, he emphasizes the value of understanding how states of consciousness affect health. Not surprisingly, he found that getting enough sleep, the "brain-mind's own resident physician," is an important path to well-being. *Donna Seaman*

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