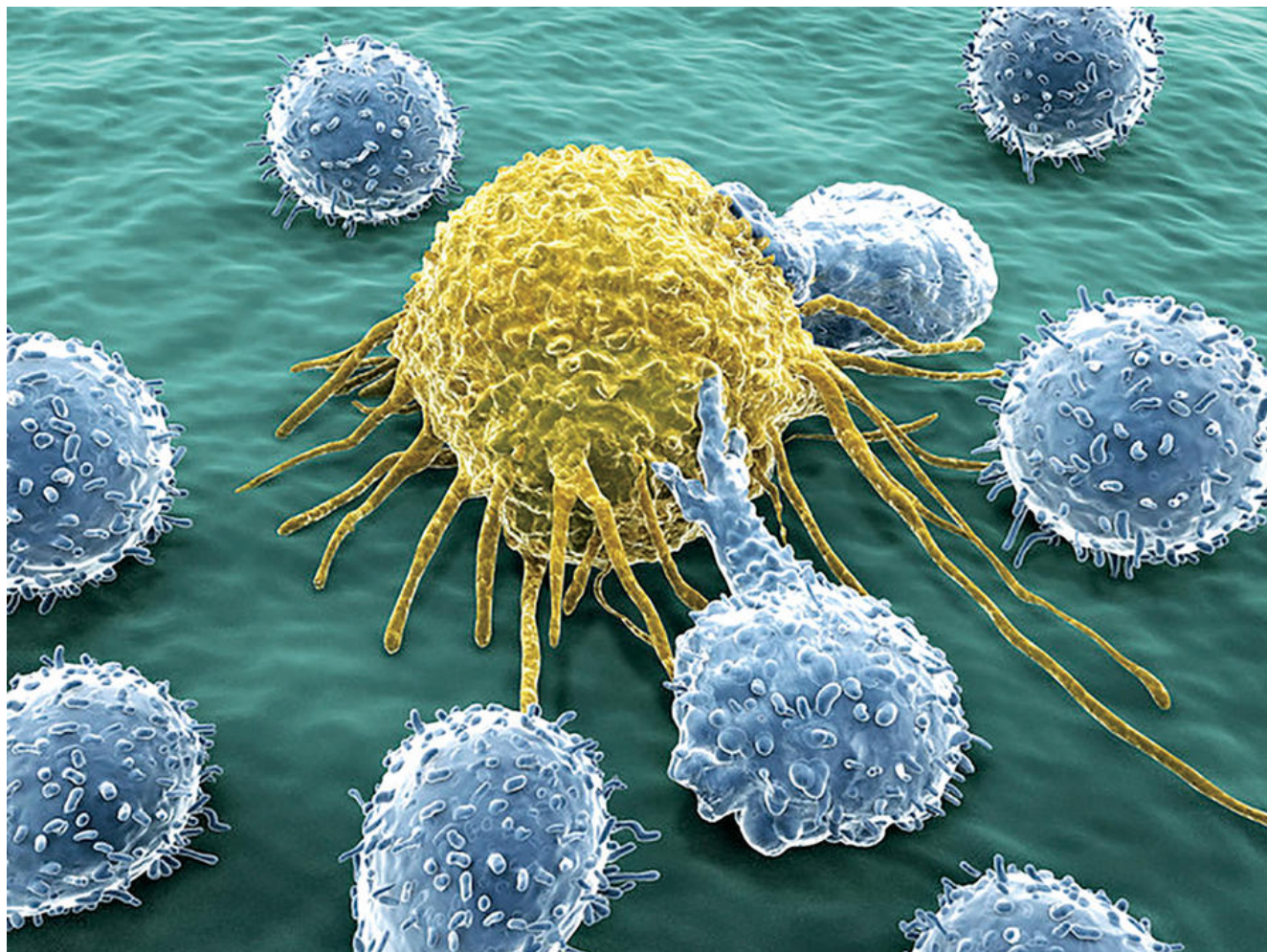


**Sure, the body is mindless.
By why should the mind be
mindless, too?**



White blood cells attack a foreign cancer cell.

by Lev Tsitrin

To make sure I was neither reinventing the wheel, nor plagiarizing, I googled “body mind” – and was stunned by profusion of resulting links. It turns out that there is something called “[Mind-body problem](#)” that goes all the way back to the time before Aristotle and was reformulated to its current form by Descartes. It is defined by Wikipedia as “a philosophical debate concerning the relationship between thought and consciousness in the human mind, and the brain as

part of the physical body. The debate goes beyond addressing the mere question of how mind and body function chemically and physiologically. Interactionism arises when mind and body are considered as distinct, based on the premise that the mind and the body are fundamentally different in nature.”

The Wikipedia entry was so erudite, so lengthy, and had so many sub-links to equally mind-numbing subjects that I decided to put down my own thoughts without further study, even at the risk of plagiarism. If someone catches me in it, I concede and apologize in advance. My bad.

This said, what I am talking about is not the difference between mind and body, but their surprising similarity. I don't want to suggest causality here; perhaps the similarity is purely coincidental – and yet, it is clearly observable: both the mind and the body tend to have a similarly adversarial reaction to what may be beneficial to them, but is alien in origin.

When a diseased organ that threatens body's physical survival is surgically replaced, the [body does something counter-productive](#): “the recipient's immune system will identify the organ as foreign and attempt to destroy it, causing transplant rejection.” While the patient's mind knows that the procedure is beneficial, the body doesn't. If it possessed reason, the body would have first checked the newcomer for its function and, having detected that it functioned much better than the organ that got replaced, it would have rejoiced at this replacement. Yet irrationally (but blamelessly, because it has no reason), the body does what is opposite to its vital self-interest and attacks what is good for it – leading to self-harm, if not self-destruction.

Now, one would think that because the mind *does* reason (which is its one and only function, in fact), this should not be happening to ideas. Having encountered a new, unproven idea – an idea so brand-new that it has not yet become the part of

established body of knowledge and is not supported (or discredited) by recognized authorities, the mind, one would think, would give it a chance and, while not automatically accepting it (which would indeed be foolish, for the idea may be wrong and harmful), it would at least give it a fair chance by examining its weak points, and if none are found would evaluate its usefulness with a view of adopting it. One would think that this should be a reasonable thing for a mind to do. After all, all that mind does, is it reasons things out.

And yet, the snap rejection of new, "alien" ideas is not that uncommon. Mark Twain recalled later in life how he rejected out of hand the chance to purchase shares offered him – at deep discount – by an inventor by the name of Alexander Graham Bell: his ideas were simply too wild, too alien.

I am no Bell, and the ideas that came to my mind are far more simple, – and yet, I would argue, they may be of very considerable utility. Is an idea that has the potential to end Islamist terrorism useless? It isn't, because countering terrorism consumes huge resources: money, manpower, military materiel – all of which could be directed to other uses if the problem of terrorism is solved; not to mention that terrorists kill people and cause suffering and misery – so putting an end to terrorism is a worthy goal. And yet I discovered that, time after time, the simple idea that the Islamist ideology which fuels Islamist terrorism can be examined and easily debunked, is met with a reflexive, knee-jerk rejection by the very people who are professionally engaged in fighting terrorism. To them, the only proper tools are political, economic, military pressure. Starving terrorists of supporters and funds, bombing and Killing them, is how the fight against them needs to proceed. But persuasion? Telling terrorists that their ideology is wrong? Are you kidding? How stupid, if not mad, is that?

I recall talking to a head of a religion department at a major university, suggesting that ayatollahs' confidence that they

follow the divine will by basing their policies on the Koran was, religiously speaking, idol-worship – given that it is physically impossible for anyone to know whether God talked to Mohammed. A very intelligent woman, she instantly grasped the idea and agreed that Islamists were idolaters. Yet when I suggested the next logical step – that this be publicly discussed in academia and the media to make it impossible to ignore so it reaches the Islamists themselves, thus imploding the regimes like Iran's, her jaw literally dropped, and she looked at me in disbelief that something like this could actually be suggested. Yes, ayatollahs and their ilk are idolaters. But saying it in so many words? Impossible!

Having attended a lecture on Islamist terrorism given by a former assistant Defense Secretary, I raised my hand during Q&A and asked the same question. This time, it was the reaction of the audience that surprised me – I suddenly heard hisses. I was in the front row, and turned back to look – and the intelligent, educated people in the audience were actually hissing at me. I asked them what was wrong, but no one replied – apparently, they felt instinctively that some implicit but crucial line got crossed, my trespass needing no articulation. And apparently, the lecturer felt the same way – he called for the next question without answering mine, and that was that. When, after the lecture, I asked him why he did not take my question, he told me “I did not like the direction this conversation was taking.” But why? There was no answer.

The very same thing happened at an event organized by a prominent conservative think tank. “I will not debate Islamic theology with the Islamists,” was the reply of the lecturer.

And yet, what is so self-evidently unacceptable about this idea? Islamists are not irrational. They merely apply the perfectly valid logic to a factually wrong premise, as a result normalizing the behavior which we call “terrorism” and they call “obedience to God.” What exactly is wrong with showing them that their central premise – that one is in a

position to know that the Koran is God's word – is factually wrong, and their assurance of following God's will is misplaced? Exposing their error is much less expensive than bombing them – and may be far more effective, given that ideas can get to places that are impervious to bombs. And yet, the idea that we should try to use reason on the likes of the Taliban and Iran's ayatollahs are rejected out of hand – rejected instinctively, just like a body rejects a transplanted organ – and by people with top minds (or at least, with PhDs).

Likewise, having discovered in my attempt to publish a book on that subject that the “freedom for all” is a myth and that corporate book-publishers are protected by a government-sponsored, “crony capitalism” scheme that hands over the “marketplace of ideas” that are nation's bookstores and libraries to corporations, so only they can get to library acquisition funds, and the moneys spent by book-lovers – and that this censorship arrangement is further entrenched by fraudster judges who, instead of evaluating parties' argument, concoct in their decisions judges' own argument in clear violation of “due process,” and when sued for fraud, defend such “procedure” by the self-given in *Pierson v Ray* right to act from the bench “maliciously and corruptly,” I turned to the mainstream media suggesting they shed the light on the fact that the entire branch of US government, its judiciary, is officially and proudly corrupt and malicious – I encountered the exact same instinctive, unreasoning, knee-jerk rejection.

And yet again, this was met with a knee-jerk, unreasoned, instinctive rejection: in addition to sending e-mails to mainstream media outlets, I spoke to several journalists in person (plus, I talked to a bunch of journalism professors, including a dean of a university's journalism school) – and none would explain to me the reason why the judiciary can't be investigated by the press, why this must be a taboo. They

would just shrug their shoulders, giggling sometimes, and looking at me uncomfortably as if I was from Mars – though there is clearly something wrong with allowing judges to violate “due process” and to act “maliciously and corruptly” from the bench. Journalists’ rejection was clearly instinctive – as if they were mindless bodies automatically rejecting a perfectly functioning organ because it came from the outside.

I will not presume to speculate on whether there is a causal link between the instinctive rejectionism of the mindless body, and that of the intelligence-infused mind – let the experts on the “mind-body problem” enlighten us. But what I do know, is that both kinds of rejection work to our detriment. There are plenty of excuses for the body’s rejectionism – it only follows the laws of biology, after all – but what can excuse human intelligence’s instinctive refusal to engage with the brand-new ideas?

We have no control over our bodies – but a pretty good control over our minds. We cannot tell the body to act in a way that is good for us – but why can’t we tell the mind to do it? This, after all, is what the mind is supposed to do – evaluate ideas, and not shut itself off when the ideas in question are brand-new (or when they are “politically incorrect” for that matter, given that what is politically incorrect may well be factually correct – and that’s the only thing that matters). Why is it that we allow our presumably rational mind, which we control, behave as if it were a mindless body?

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