

The Three-Pound Universe: What is it, and Why?

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It has been said that: “The universe exists for us only in so far as it exists in our brain. The brain is our three-pound universe.” (Hopper & Teressi, 1986, p.3, *The 3-lb Universe*)

It has similarly been said that: “Each of us lives within the universe—the prison—of his (*or her*) own brain.” (Mountcastle, 1975)

Some of us seem content to live within the constraints of the mental prisons constructed for us by parents, teachers, religious and political leaders, etc. Others, because of the inspiration of their mentors and their own desires, continually strive to throw open the doors of their prison, and to escape into an ever expanding universe of new experiences, ideas, and possibilities.

Because of our three-pound-universe constraints, it is very important for us to study and learn about the brain, and to understand its biological mechanisms of perception, thought, decision making, etc., and the associated environmental influences and psychological processes.

The Three-Pound Universe concept relates to a fundamental unifying theme of psychology, that our *experience* of the world is *highly subjective*, and moreover that each species' nervous system is specialized for its own particular *ecological niche*. Hence, each species *senses and does* some things better than other species, but each also has *specific limitations*.

What is the Evidence for the Three-Pound Universe?

1. Sensory limitations and species differences
2. Perceptual experiences result from active, constructive processes, rather than being passive
3. Perceptual illusions
4. Delusions and hallucinations of mental illness
5. Ancient descriptions of the world, which are quite different from modern, scientific descriptions
6. Psychosomatic illnesses and voodoo deaths