The digital anatomy of schizophrenia.

Martha Shenton*

Department of Neurology, Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging, University College London, London, UK

Abstract

This essay examines psychotic symptoms in terms of erroneous deductions or assumptions. It is predicated on the idea that the brain actively generates hypotheses to describe or anticipate its sensations. This viewpoint offers a normative account of behaviour and perception that places an emphasis on probabilistic representations, particularly the certainty or accuracy of worldviews. Hallucinosis, irregular eye movements, sensory attenuation impairments, catatonia, and delusions will all be viewed as different manifestations of the same underlying disease, which is an aberrant encoding of precision. This illustrates a dangerous failure of metacognition, which can confuse perceptual inference, from a cognitive standpoint. It can result in actions that are paradoxically more accurate in the embodied context of active inference.

Keywords: Sensory attenuation impairments, Catatonia, Delusions.

Introduction

This work makes an effort to link neuromodulatory dysconnections at the synaptic level to the explanation of the positive and negative symptoms of schizophrenia in terms of incorrect inference about conditions of the world creating sensations. The Bayesian brain hypothesis and active inference are the cornerstones of our normative approach to action and perception, to put it briefly [1]. Then to see how certain failures of neuromodulation would manifest in terms of perceptual inference and behaviour, we consider neuronally plausible implementations of active inference. The major finding is that a variety of psychotic symptoms can be explained by an inability to reflect the accuracy of worldviews, and that this inability corresponds to aberrant neuromodulation of superficial pyramidal cells' post-synaptic gain in cortical regions [2].

By analysing classical statistical reasoning, it is possible to understand intuitively the nature of this failure. For example, consider the case where we are using a t-test to evaluate the mean of certain data against the null hypothesis that the mean is zero. A prediction error, or the sample mean less the expectation under the null hypothesis, serves as evidence against the null hypothesis provided by the sample mean [3]. Only in connection to the accuracy of the prediction error can this be quantified. The prediction error is simply weighted by its precision to produce the t-statistic. One rejects the null hypothesis if this precision-weighted prediction error is sizably large. This essay focuses on erroneous inference. However, both inference and learning are covered by the normative principles we invoke. This is consistent with the distinction made in neurobiology between learning causal structure by updating synaptic efficacy and updating neural representations in terms of synaptic activity [4]. The crucial point in this case is that aberrant precision beliefs also result in faulty learning, which causes false inference and is itself caused by false learning. The nature of inference, which creates posterior dependencies among estimates of hidden quantities in the environment, unavoidably leads to this circular causation. The key takeaway is that even a minor malfunction in neuromodulation can have profound implications that appear at a variety of levels [5].

Inference and learning under uncertainty are made possible by bayesian algorithms. They also recommend the best way to combine previous expectations with sensory evidence at a given time; this combination is best since it captures the relative uncertainty of each information source. This makes it essential for inference that precision is accurately represented in a hierarchical Bayesian framework.

Conclusion

Therefore, by favouring previous assumptions or sensory data, the aberrant encoding of accuracy might produce incorrect inference. Various trait abnormalities in schizophrenia may be caused by a drop in prior precision while some psychotic states may be caused by compensatory increases in past precision, according to this paper. We have demonstrated how a decrease in high-level precision might account for two trait phenomena: faulty ERP responses to predictable and unpredictable stimuli, and abnormal SPEM results. We have also demonstrated how a failure to reduce sensory precision may account for both illusion resistance and catatonia. We were able to explain the delusional and hallucinogenic inference typical of the psychotic condition by compensatory gains in prior precision using these model systems.

***Correspondence to:** Martha Shenton, Department of Neurology, Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging, University College London, London, UK., E-mail: martha_shenton@hms.harvard.edu

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