

Re: First Causes

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.cognitive/2004-09/0412.html>

From: JPL Verhey (matterDELminds_at_hotmail.com)

Date: 09/14/04

Date: Tue, 14 Sep 2004 15:13:23 +0200

"Alex Green" <dralexgreen@yahoo.co.uk> wrote in message
news:42c8441.0409130304.33a950a0@posting.google.com...
> "JPL Verhey" <matterDELminds@hotmail.com> wrote in message
> news:<4143a1eb\$0...

[..]

>> *The human toolbox: (1) Passive "epiphenomenal" consciousness + (2)
>> active "intervening" consciousness + (3) active-verbal conscious
>> evaluation (thought) for long term planning and decision making.*

>>

>> *This tool-box enables us to (1) be aware of hunger, (2) jump to the
>> fridge in a reflex but find it totally empty.. and (3) decide to go
>> to*

>> *the shop tomorrow. (4) actually going to shop next day.*

>>

>> *Many of our daily life behaviors are of the 1/2/3/4 type. Notably
>> conscious decisions (3) and the subsequent behavior (4) following
>> (much)*

>> *later.. don't point to epiphenomalism as telling the whole story.*

>> *This,*

>> *apart from it's "ghostly" connotations and the afore mentioned
>> determinism-indeterminisms general uncertainties.*

>>

>

>

> *I would almost agree with this model but would isolate 'conscious
> experience' from ordinary processes to a greater degree. The content
> of conscious experience has sometimes been identified with a
> hypothetical neural 'global workspace' that brings together sensory
> data from all the senses and some non-sensory data. This workspace
> could be the physical instantiation of 'conscious experience' but
> would also be both a repository and a source for ongoing processing.*

>

> *See: <http://cogweb.ucla.edu/CogSci/GWorkspace.html>*

I read the page.

- >
- > *If conscious experience did not exist we would propose that the global workspace was a model that allows the brain to maintain position and other data without always refreshing these from the senses. We would also propose that 'free will' was due to non-conscious processing of signals that compared the state of the model (or parts of the model) with the actual state of the world.*
- >
- > *Conscious experience seems an odd property for such a workspace and, in the context of information systems theory, it is difficult to see what 'conscious experience' would add. This is one of Ryle's objections: consciousness is just a 'ghost in the machine'.*

It's not clear to me what Ryle means to say. Is it:

(1) .. that we know enough to call it a machine, and enough about the machine to decide that consciousness must be a 'ghost' adding nothing.. which, indeed, begs the question why consciousness arises to begin with.

Or..

(2) ..that because consciousness ends-up appearing to be a ghost that doesn't seem to add/do anything.. *our understanding of the "machine" must be incomplete*. Here the problem is not the "ghost".. but our insufficient understanding of the "machine" (and of the fabric of reality in general) to account for consciousness.

I vote for nr (2). But more importantly and additionally, it is the unbridgable gap between 1st-person experience (BEING a conscious brainprocess) and 3rd-personally observing your own bodybrain. The brain as we know it, understand it and study it, is as much an internal representation of "3rd personally observed" objects like the moon or a chair are. We don't see contradictions when we observe other people's bodies or brains among all the other objects around them – to which known physical laws can be applied and further developed – only when we realize that we happen to BE one of those conscious bodybrain processes.. a virtual paradox appears, because we start to confuse "input" (the experience-independent things in the world) with the "output" which is the conscious experience, i.e. our *perception* of the experience-independent world.

This simply means, that if you start with the perceived brain (the internal representation of it, called the "physical brain") and hold it to be the "machine" that somehow produces (as a cause) or harbours conscious experience... you REVERSE causality, the arrow of time, or "input" and "output". The only "hard problem" that is real here.. is to come to terms with this fact or be able to see it, IMHO. For quite a while it is my opinion that the natural sciences that study the brain, like you (as I understand it) and many others do, are doing the real important work and should not be bothered with any "hard problems" or "epiphenomenal ghosts" issues.

sci.cognitive: Re: First Causes

--

Cheers, JPL

<http://home.tiscali.nl/boynalechmipo/>

On consciousness: experiential bubbles,
solipsism, mind-brain duality, the binding problem,
the hard problem and artificial consciousness.

>

> In your menu of properties:

> "(1) Passive "epiphenomenal" consciousness + (2) active "intervening"
> consciousness + (3) active-verbal conscious evaluation (thought) for
> long term planning and decision making."

>

> 2 and 3 could be non-conscious processes that reload the global
> workspace as they occur. (1) is undoubtedly a geometric form of the
> workspace - just look around, this 'view' is brain activity. As a
> geometric form (1) cannot intervene in a classical way in the
> processing that provides its content. However, the time extension of
> experience makes it seem as if the changing content is due to
> conscious activity rather than being the result of continuous update
> by non-conscious processes.

>

> Although a geometrical form cannot intervene in a classical way, a
> time extended geometric form is quite bizarre and may have properties
> that affect brain activity in a non-classical way (such as via QM
> phenomena). If this occurs then it may be possible that we have
> 'conscious free-will' as well as possibly, non-conscious free will.
> Such a free will would occur as a type of intuition - there would be
> no classical process for decisions and they would just appear as
> selections from scarcely apprehended alternatives.

>

> Alex

>

>>

>>

>> >

>> > What we know is that if you abolish consciousness by trauma to the
>> > ILN

>> > or suppressing ILN activity with general anaesthetic coma results.

>> > If

>> > patients 'recover' from trauma to the ILN they suffer extreme

>> > delirium, persistent vegetative state, akinetic mutism etc. This

>> > suggests that conscious experience has a global role in the brain,

>> > stabilising activity. Those who have lost consciousness due to ILN

>> > removal have no 'meaningful' behaviour if they awake from coma - in

>> > PVS they just move their eyes blankly, in delirium they make no

>> > sense.

>> > This suggests that conscious experience is at the other end of the

>> > chain of relations from the various senses, it is a state, not an

>> > encoding of data. Encoded data just runs around the brain without

>> > meaning without conscious experience.

>> >

>> > According to these observations conscious experience is not

>> > epiphenomenal but neither is it directly responsible for specific

>> > behaviours. It does something else. Stability is a definite

>> > phenomenon

>> > but why consciousness for stability? My own suspicion is that,

>> > despite

>> > Tegmark, the brain does experience quantum noise. Recent studies

>> > showing that single neurons can precipitate behaviours would seem

>> > to

>> > confirm this (Even Tegmark's calculations might allow 1 in 10^{11}

>> > neurons to have an uncertain state).

Re: First Causes

sci.cognitive: Re: First Causes

```
>> >  
>> > If consciousness is a point phenomenon such as Zeh suggested then  
>> > we  
>> > would truly be in a situation where the brain would be unstable  
>> > without it and the 'many minds' theories of the universe would be  
>> > possible.  
>> >  
>> > Best Wishes  
>> >  
>> > Alex Green
```