Re: Religion center in the brain

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- *From*: Wolf K <El_Lobo_Viejo@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
- *Date*: Sat, 09 Sep 2006 09:51:40 −0400

Kali wrote:

> In <45022058$0$29445$9a6e19ea@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Wolf K El_Lobo_Viejo@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx said: : Kali wrote: : > In <1157752504.963352.179650@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Matt : > Menge mspmenge@xxxxxxxxxxx said: : > :

[I think I've ascribed the quotes correctly below.]

[...]

[Sizemore:}

> : > : > But in the final analysis, correlations between brain loci and observed
> : > : > deficits etc. don't explain how neurophysiology mediates behavioral
> : > : > function. But it seems that it does to a number of people. Neuroimaging has,
> : > : > for many, become a sort of endpoint. I suggest that this is because their
> : > : > conceptualization is now, and has always been, a thinly−disguised animism.
> : > : > They already talk as if indwelling entities − call them homunculi − see
> : > : > copies of the world, make decisions on that basis, and pull the levers that
> : > : > make behavior occur. And now they think they know where the little men are
> : > : > hiding in the brain.
> : >

[Kali:]

> : > This strikes me as woefully out of touch.

[Menge:]

> : > : Haven't we analyzed the process of visual perception to the point where
> : > : even different aspects of it have been localized to certain regions of
> : > : the brain, kind of run in a parallel processing fashion?
> : > : : > : Best Regards,
> : > : : > : Matt

[Kali:]

> : > Yes, although the system is less parallel than dynamic. I wonder : > who "they" (these referenced animists) are. : > : > Kali
> :

[Wolf K.]

> : You're one, it seems.

It's not an assumption, it's a tentative inference, based on your apparent support of the notion that "different aspects of perception are localised in certain regions of the brain." This language usually goes along with notions of perception happening in the brain, which in turn leads to notions of perception being what the brain does. Or even what individual neurons do.

I did say "seems", and I did choose that qualifier after some thought about just what you might be saying. So kindly read me as carefully as I write. Getting all huffy doesn't help. If I misunderstood you, then explain yourself.

> : What we actually observe is that certain neurons or groups of neurons : activate when certain objects are present in the visual field and/or the : subject talks about (etc) certain objects present in the visual field : and/or the subject remembers seeing (etc) certain objects (etc.) What we : don't observe is any part of the brain perceiving anything. What we : actually observe is _subjects_ (people, animals) perceiving.
>
> You're serious, aren't you? You're going to ride this assumption to hell and back, too:

Well, your response to Menge indicates that you ascribe perception to the brain, and not to the organism. If you don't, say so, and then explain why your comment to Menge indicates otherwise.

To clarify my position: It's not the brain or neurons that "perceive", it's the organism as a whole. Observing brain processes that correlate with observed perceptions does not explain those perceptions. That doesn't mean that knowing about those correlated brain processes is unhelpful: it may be possible to affect those processes and so to affect the perceptions, which in the case of schizophrenics (for example) could be a good thing. But those processes don't explain perception, nor are they perception.

> : Consider a driver driving a car. She steps on the accelerator and the : car speeds up. Various parts of the car respond in characteristic ways − : the injector pushes more fuel and air into the cylinders, the oil pump : pushes more oil through the bearings, the transmission rearranges itself : internally ("shifts gears"), and so on and so forth. By your logic, : these are all "aspects of acceleration localised within the car."
>
> I reject your incorrect assumptions about 'my logic' entirely.

I'm just applying the logic you appear to use on "perception" to "acceleration", is all. If you don't like what your logic implies, change it. Or else explicate it further, so that I can see what error(s) I made in applying it to an analogous case. It's no good saying you reject my application of your logic. I expect you to argue. I argued my case − do me the courtesy or arguing your case.

It's no good merely rejecting my application of your logic. If you want to have a serious conversation, I expect you to take my attempts at understanding you seriously. One way of understanding you is to apply your argument pattern (that's what I intend by "logic") to another case, and see what transpires. It's one of many techniques of making sense of what other people say.

> : You can't ascribe a behaviour of the whole system to some part(s) of the : system. The best you can do is say that the behaviour of some part(s) of : the system correlate to the system's behaviour. And sometimes you can : say some part's behaviour is a link in a causative chain that results in : the system's behaviour. Then you consider yourself lucky, because you : may be able to influence the system's behaviour by controlling the : part's behaviour. If your luck extends that far.
> : : BTW, systems analysts know this very well. Maybe cognitive scientists : should study systems analysis.
>
> Kali

Well, what's your response to my last paragraph, in which I sum up one of the many lessons to be learned from ascribing perception to the brain rather than to the organism?

A further comment: systems that are "complex enough to be of interest", don't consist of causative chains, but of causative webs. That complicates the issue when attempting to understand the system processes that are implicated in, correlated with, etc, perception (etc). Your and Menge's references to parallel and dynamic processes indicate that's your area of interest. I'm not clear what you mean by dynamic as opposed to parallel processing.

HTH
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