



Consciousness is not a mystery

A consciência não é um mistério

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Léo Peruzzo Jr. – In your work, for example *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, we can pinpoint the existence of an area focused in demonstrating scientific results about the relation between consciousness and brain. Do you believe that this new science border can limit the philosophic activity?

Daniel Dennett – On the contrary, I think philosophy will expand to consider more and more scientific questions dealing with consciousness. The scientists have conceptual problems and we can help them, but first we need to learn the science.

Léo Peruzzo Jr. – You have argued in your works that the interior states, i.e. consciousness, do not exist as a point located in the brain. Thus, consciousness would be a series of inputs and outputs. In which way do your statements open the doors for a development of cognitive science?

Daniel Dennett – Cognitive science has the goal of describing the FUNCTIONAL ARCHITECTURE of the conscious mind. This is not quite the same as the functional anatomy of the brain, since the same anatomy (except at the micro-level) can support very different competences. For instance the difference between an Anglophone and a Francophone brain does not appear at the level of functional neuro-anatomy, and the brain of a chess player is not anatomically different (except at the micro level, which is indiscernible) from the brain of a person who does not play chess. For all the higher competences of human minds, we need the computational architecture of cognitive science, and philosophy can help with that project.

Léo Peruzzo Jr. – Can we say that the Western dualisms — mind-body, consciousness-brain, spirit-substance — are in fact just a result of the great biological process (i.e. evolution) that is the human nature?

Daniel Dennett – Yes, dualism is an artifact of cognitive illusions that arise naturally in human minds.

Léo Peruzzo Jr. – In which way can the evolutionist discussion that we find, for example, in *Consciousness Explained* contribute to rethink the borders between the “philosophical abstraction” and the “empirical data” presented by science? Would this data be a sufficient proof to sustain a materialistic model of consciousness?

Daniel Dennett – I think so. It is everybody’s task to explain how consciousness gets designed — it is not a random or chaotic phenomenon but rather is intricately designed to do its work. Evolution in the brain

and evolution in human culture both contribute to the design work that must be done to make a human mind.

Léo Peruzzo Jr. – Recently your works sustain that a religious belief has possible evolutionary reasons that could explain its development and acceptance in human species. What constitutes this hypothesis, in a nutshell?

Daniel Dennett – Religions all began as “wild” cultural items — memes — that competed for space and energy in human brains. Our brains became populated with ideas of invisible spirits, ghosts, fairies, goblins, monsters, and these became the source of early polytheisms. When we then domesticated these ideas, we got “organized” religion.

Léo Peruzzo Jr. – Some characteristics of your research program present extremely new aspects to the cognitive science. From your perspective what is the destiny of the relation between humans and machines? Will we be closer to discovering a key to comprehend who we are in fact? Or consciousness will still remain a mystery in the next decades and centuries?

Daniel Dennett – Consciousness is not a mystery; it is a puzzle that we are now solving. I hope to see a secure explanation, in detail, of human consciousness in my lifetime.