

The brain is only a part of the consciousness* - 26/01/2019

The main aspect of this interview is the Alva's argument that the consciousness does not reside entirely inside of us. If one thinks in consciousness, he thinks in a straightforward relationship between the consciousness and the brain, one to one. So, a feeling would have an electrical pulse associated in the brain. However, Alva argues that is more than that. We can say the brain performs a difficult job, but we are interacting with the world outside as well.

He makes an analogy with the value of a 25 cents coin. Where is this value? Is it produced by whom? There is a complex system behind this. We have feelings and sensations represented in the brain, we have contents from outside but there is a substrate inside of us and it is beyond our brain. So, is the brain by itself sufficient? No, only part of it, but there is interaction between brain, body, environment and other people[i]. Otherwise it would be very hard to explain how am I apprehending the content outside? The brain is not self-sufficient... It isn't as our stomach in the digestion process and the mystery is exactly this illusion.

A very good example he quotes is about the tomato. The tomato we feel is not an exact copy in our mind but it is only a body in front of me. Despite of the fact that we have the sensation that the color and the flavor of the tomato are inside of us, without the "real" tomato we don't have a tomato in our mind[ii]. For example, we cannot see the back of the tomato but we have the consciousness of that part. So, more than we can see, we have an expanded experience of consciousness. Only the visual experience can't see the back side. The sense of presence of the hidden part in some sense is presented in our experience. The perceptual consciousness extends to a new way of presence and an ability of move around the tomato and then we presume it has a back part. We could not have the representation of a tomato without the tomato; we need the outside world.

To continue and finalize, he talks about immigration as an example where people move between cultures and changes their habits. So, consciousness extends beyond our craniums in a real sense. We are ourselves not autonomous and we are not free because we are linked to a large environment. A science of consciousness should consider the brain in dynamic involvement and agree that consciousness does not happen only inside the brain: that is all. And, this also means that we have much more interaction with the world around us and

less autonomy that we could put into our wishes and freedom.

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* Digest of "Alva Noë - Why is Consciousness so baffling?".

In:

https://youtu.be/1aPeWc7Um1A?list=PLnDky5U6KdTnVPeMbpyhUtbvLLYvURkq_&t=69.

[i] I had the opinion that our consciousness should be all over our whole body, as Merleau-Ponty described. However, here, is more than that and it is a phenomenological point of view.

[ii] Here we can point out to the realism/idealism problem and the very long discussion related.

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