

Uniqueness of consciousness[i] - 26/09/2018

John Searle refutes both dualism and materialism to bring biological naturalism where mind, as a biological phenomenon, is part of the nature. He says, both, dualism and materialism have true and false arguments so he focus on what he considers true. He preserves the two main ways: everything is physical and a part of it is mental.

The biological naturalism follows the steps:

1. We cannot deny that consciousness exists. Materialism says consciousness is an illusion but when one thinks in consciousness he knows he is conscious. Therefore, consciousness is real and it even can be irreducible.
2. We don't know all the events that happen in our brain yet; either our vision or why we feel pain. However, we can track our vision processes in the brain and find out the nervous that can cause a vision. Similarly, the consciousness can be a process that is caused somewhere in the neurons such as the function of the "high level brain system"[ii].

John Searle uses the digestion analogy to explain consciousness: the same way we say that digestion is a physical process in the stomach; consciousness is a process that occurs in the brain. So, in a near future, with a better understanding of the brain we can understand the consciousness as well[iii].

The analogy quoted also shows they are different in one aspect: the digestion is ontological reducible to the stomach but the consciousness is not ontological reducible to the brain. Ontological means one thing for the stomach, so digestion is ontological reducible but consciousness is not reducible to the brain, because there is our subjective experience as well. We have a causal reduction but not an ontological reduction.

John Searle concludes saying consciousness is special: it can be causally reduced to a neuron but not ontological because it is "another thing" (my quote). This a materialism point of view, but kind of different because biological naturalism demonstrates the uniqueness of the consciousness. We don't say it is not physical; we say it is physical with a ontological property.

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[i] Digestion of “John Searle - Can Brain Explain Mind?”:

<<https://youtu.be/ehdZAY0Zr6A?t=17>>

[ii] John Searle also argues in favor of the mental causation. For him, it is clear that we have behaviors produced by intentions, for example, when we think in a thing we say that thing.

[iii] This way the consciousness discussion would change from a metaphysical to a scientific debate.

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