

论文

从脑科学的新发展看人文学问题

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摘要:

神经科学的发展已经形成了关于人文学某些经典问题的重新思考或认识。当前的神经科学发现显示: 我们的大脑和意识都是物质性的, 意识的身心二元论是不能成立的, 应该回归于大脑一元论。大脑很重要的一部分工作是无意识的, 但却能很好地完成许多在常人看来需要意识去完成的工作, 这种无意识的大脑运作过程也是大脑的一种客观属性。另外, 常识心理学中所谓自由意志的存在是很可疑的, 大脑在意识到自己作出决定之前已经作了决定, 无意识的意志根据环境中发生的情况而作出瞬间的决定, 其过程主要由大脑在发育期间所形成的工作方式以及由之后我们所学到的知识(记忆)决定。当然, 自由意志是否存在这个重要问题的最终答案还应该来自于未来更多的科学实验。

关键词: 神经科学 人文学 大脑 意识 自由意志

Notes on Some Fundamental Questions in the Humanities Based on Progresses in Brain Research

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Abstract:

The rapid and strong development of brain research in the recent decades necessitates a re-thinking or re-awaking of some classical questions in the humanities, which may have significant effects on our society. As neuroscientists we would like to share with our colleagues from the humanities our points of view concerning these questions. Our points presented in this paper concern three important issues: (i) essence of the human mind, (ii) consciousness and unconsciousness of the brain, and (iii) free will. Ad (i) Our fundamental point of view is that the classical body-mind dualism has disappeared with the new development of neuroscience and should be replaced by a brain-monism. The mind is the result of our 100 billion brain cells working together, and is thus a product of the brain. The mind is produced by the brain by action potentials, neurotransmitters and synaptic changes, resulting in changes in the activities of the brain cells, and interactions of the brain areas. The results of brain work are objective since they are solely the consequences of the changes in transmitter release and activity of nerve cells in particular brain areas. There are also good neuroscientific explanations for the so-called "subjective" properties of one's personality or character. It is the genetic background, early brain development, and remodeling of the brain caused by later developmental experiences playing together to make each brain unique. These mind-differences can be explained on the basis of differences in brain structures and functions and they are purely objective. Ad (ii) Most of our brain work is unconscious and it can very well carry out complex tasks this way. Such unconscious processing of the brain is also one of its objective properties. In addition, the brain (= I) does have the unconscious wish "to survive," which has developed during evolution and that during evolution the wish for food and reproduction are strongly coupled to our brain reward systems has proven to be an extremely efficient mechanism. These basic wishes are sublimated in the human being into products of work, science and art. Ad (iii) Scientific experiments have shown that our brain makes decisions before we are conscious of them. These observations seriously question whether we have any degree of free will. The unconscious will takes split-second decisions on the basis of what is going on in our surroundings, a process that is importantly determined by the way our brains were formed during development and by what we have learned since then (= memories). That the feeling of "free will" is an illusion has gained support of many experimental data, although the final answer to this important question should come from future experiments. Finally, we think that developments in neuroscience not only promote our penetration into the essence of human beings, but also significantly inspire the improvement in our social ethics and mechanism, as for example, in the case of how we should fairly and efficiently punish the offenders who have psychiatric disorders.

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Keywords: neuroscience humanities brain mind free will

收稿日期 修回日期 网络版发布日期 2012-07-03

DOI:

基金项目:

通讯作者:

作者简介:

参考文献:

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