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The Mind–Brain Problem in Cognitive Neuroscience

Introduction

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Introduction

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This special issue is dedicated to one of the oldest and most controversial philosophical topics, the mind–body problem. Paradoxically, since Descartes until the present days, nobody has proposed a viable solution to this problem. In the last decades, through the unification of neuroscience and psychology, a new science, cognitive neuroscience, was created to deal with this problem. Using EEG¹, fMRI², and other apparatus, scientists try to grasp the “correlations” between any mental state and some neural patterns of activation. Articles and presentations on the “brain imaging” results (mainly using fMRI) have invaded journals and conferences. There are many optimists (with some quite remarkable results) and few skeptics regarding these results in cognitive neuroscience. Anyway, there are exciting times ahead for people working in this interdisciplinary field.

In this issue, two articles on the mind–brain relationship are written by scientists: the neuroscientist Edmund T. Rolls and the cognitive neuroscientist Cees van Leeuwen. Some articles on scientific topics are written by philosophers: William Bechtel on endogenous activity of the brain, Kari Theurer & John Bickle on molecular neuroscience reductionism, and Gabriel Vacariu & Mihai Vacariu on the actual status of cognitive neuroscience. Articles on more philosophical topics are written by other philosophers: Bernard Andrieu explores the first-person status from a neuro-experiential viewpoint, Corey Maley & Gualtiero Piccinini evaluate the status of functionalism, while Paula Droege analyzes two quite difficult topics, memory and consciousness.

The empirical and theoretical knowledge of cognitive neuroscience has been quite changeable in the last years, so we hope that, putting together different viewpoints of scientists and philosophers, this issue will help (young) people on their work in (philosophy of) cognitive neuroscience.

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1. EEG = Electroencephalography

2. fMRI = Functional magnetic resonance imaging.

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