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WHITEHEAD: A METAPHYSICAL GROUND
FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Abstract

What kind of relation can be found between Searle's philosophy of mind and Whitehead's metaphysics? The former is a conceptual field claiming that consciousness is an emerging and irreducible feature of brain's activity; the latter is a kind of metaphysics describing an ontological scenery without using the concept of substance and introducing the "event" as a new dynamic element of reality.

By analysing this kind of metaphysics we can relate the formal structure of consciousness, as it is the formal and quantitative feature of the "prehension", to the features about consciousness Searle is usually speaking of. In the metaphysics of Whitehead we can find that consciousness is a high-level emphasis of abstractions which only a few prehension is provided with. On the other hand, the emphasis of a prehension coincide with the grade of abstraction of the same prehension; and that's the tool we can use to determinate the difference between inanimate world and the animate one, between the animal world and the human one, between the human actions without awareness and the experience of self-consciousness.

The philosophy of Whitehead can provide a metaphysical ground to the philosophy of the mind, since the theory of prehension can perfectly describe the features of consciousness in the "physical" world. This kind of philosophy, indeed, really can account for the ontological problems and the perspectives coming from neuro-biology. Consciousness in Whitehead's philosophy is a both active and passive aspect of reality; and at last we can relate these two features to, respectively, the irreducibility and the emergence of consciousness in Searle's writings.

Furthermore, by developing the metaphysics of prehensions we can reach a philosophical scenery where it's easy to recognize the concepts of *form* and *datum* of experience directly coming from Kant's philosophy. This can result extremely useful to our aims because we can look at Whitehead's theory (and the problem of consciousness too) with an attitude relating both the metaphysics and the theory of knowledge.

And a partial unification of the different sections of philosophical research is probably the way we have to go along to account adequately for the problem of consciousness.