
Neuro-Science vs. Folk Psychology: From Deadlock to Well-moderated Controversy

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Abstract

The scientifically informed public is facing a possible deadlock between neuroscientific experts claiming to "naturalize" any traditional self-description of the human psyche, and the critical response of the social sciences and humanities that the "brain" of naturalist reductionism is nothing but a techno-scientific construction, e.g. a semi-artificial epistemological object (following the terminology of Bruno Latour).

Rather than trying to solve this controversy I propose – in an analogy to Immanuel Kant's similar effort in "The Conflict of Faculties (1798)" – a meta-strategy of transforming this very controversy into a "machine of knowledge production, evaluation and specification".

With reference to Latour, Foucault and Michael Polanyi's underrated concept of "tacit knowledge" I want to show that the communal "brain" (or "brainhood" according to Fernando Vidal) as an object shared by many different professions and groups can serve as a paradigm for a new kind of knowledge production in which intense and well organized controversy is itself the process of knowledge that cannot be decided or judged by any single group of experts. As the interested public of stakeholders cannot wait until experts will decide questions that cannot be decided once and for all this idea of processional pluralistic knowledge production results in a claim for a revolution in education that enables each citizen of the knowledge society to partake in the relevant controversies of his/her time.

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