

Philosophical Illusions of Cognitive Science: Rorty and Brandom on Presuppositions and Claims of a New Discipline

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The dynamic development of cognitive science has significantly strengthened the hope of scientific understanding and explanation of mind through the complete theory of the brain and its functions. It would not make any sense to question the need of detailed research of this kind. However, drawing upon reservations and criticisms expressed by Richard Rorty and Robert B. Brandom, it seems profitable to discuss highly dubious philosophical presuppositions and excessive claim of this new discipline. It turns out, under close inspection, that cognitive science did not overcome the Cartesian heritage, but merely adapted it to the naturalistic framework. Although in some limited sense the mind is the brain, in another sense it is a rather outlandish and implausible identification. Presumably due to the lack of proper communication and exchange of ideas with philosophers, cognitive scientists frequently conflate different senses of key categories for understanding of our mental life. If this indeed so, then there is the rationale to invoke in the philosophical assessment of this discipline some remarks of Ludwig Wittgenstein about psychology, and put forward the provocative diagnosis that the confusions within cognitive science are not to be explained by its being a young science.

Selected references:

- Brandom R. B. 2004, „From a Critique of Cognitive Internalism to a Conception of Objective Spirit: Reflections on Descombes’ Anthropological Holism,” *Inquiry* 47, pp. 236–253.
- Brandom R. B. 2009, „How Analytic Philosophy Has Failed Cognitive Science,” in his *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 197–224.
- Rorty R. 2004, „The Brain as Hardware, Culture as Software,” *Inquiry* 47, pp. 219–235.