

## Naturalistic Conceptions of Consciousness in Modern Philosophy

*Natalia Nikolaevna Pluzhnikova*

Volgograd State Social Pedagogical University, Russia, 400131, Lenin Avenue, 27

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the problem of consciousness from the standpoint of naturalism. The author examines the main provisions of G. Searle's naturalistic paradigm of consciousness [9]. The study of naturalistic conceptions of consciousness which are popular in modern science, leads to several conclusions about the nature of consciousness, the specificity of consciousness and reality interaction. This article discusses the basic principles of naturalism, which are opposed by the author of the classical concept of consciousness. The author offers the constructivist paradigm of consciousness, developed within the framework of U. Maturana's neurobiology as a methodological base for consciousness study [10]. The author refers to G. Bateson's publication "Mind and Nature" to study the consciousness concept [6]. The author concludes that mind, being a brain function, is a complex, multi-dimensional model of the world. This model is created by any person knowing and realizing the world.

**Key words:** Mind • Brain • Naturalism • Philosophy • Epistemology • Cognition • Constructivism

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### INTRODUCTION

Most current investigations in the field of consciousness are based on naturalistic paradigm. Despite the fact that the philosophical origins of naturalism were stated by Descartes philosophy it started its West development in the first half of the twentieth century as an interdisciplinary trend. Neurophysiology, cellular physiology and information technology achievements became an active stimulus for the development of naturalistic conceptions of mind. Neurobiology became a theoretical core of naturalistic conceptions of mind. It's an interdisciplinary science that studies the neural connections of animals and humans.

**Consciousness from Naturalistic Standpoint:** Naturalism claims that consciousness is a natural phenomenon, therefore, it can be studied scientifically just as physical objects. This statement is a theoretical and methodological basis of naturalism. Consequently, consciousness may be verified empirically, namely, through the study of neural connections in cerebral cortex. Consciousness is the same physical object as a body.

At that naturalism denies transcendental foundations of human existence: the existence of soul, entelechy, free will, etc. As it can not philosophically explain what is consciousness, he also can't explain other things which are inherently transcendental.

According to G. Searle, one of the prominent representatives of naturalism, the consciousness can not have freedom of action in essence, as it is naturally determined: consciousness is the physical and mental component of higher order nervous systems, such as human brain and the brain of animal majority" [9, P. 4]. Consciousness is the brain mechanism that controls brain work.

**Cognitive Science:** What is consciousness from naturalism standpoint? This is the mechanism that responds to reality as a set of emotional signals and feelings. It's a registrar and fixing device of sensations [8]. Naturalism refers to cognitive sciences to substantiate his ideas about consciousness not by accident: "Cognitive sciences simulate, change the modern idea of the world structure and of human thinking, which goes against the traditional classical epistemology idea of consciousness as a simple reflection of objective reality" [7, P. 102-215].

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**Corresponding Author:** Natalia Nikolaevna Pluzhnikova, Volgograd State Social Pedagogical University, Russia, 400131, Lenin Avenue, 27.

At this point naturalism is surprisingly similar to sensationalism, which also represents consciousness as a stream of sensations [See 5].

We should not forget that naturalism explores private properties of consciousness, its individual manifestations and therefore the conclusions of naturalism will always exist in philosophy in the form of a hypothetical knowledge rather than empirical one: "Scientific hypotheses seek to explain private property, private law and private relations of reality in its specific structure observed. In other words, the own nature of certain groups of observed phenomena. On the contrary, philosophy raises the question of the general conditions and the common grounds of all existence in general and all private things are considered by it only from the point of related universal assumptions" [1].

Understanding of consciousness as a screen that reflects feelings, or as their lock indicates an operational function of consciousness, on the technical side of it, not on its essence. On the other hand, if consciousness only performs the processing operations for reality and reality itself, as postmodernists state, is a hyper simulacrum, nothing prevents consciousness from becoming a sign and not some substrate of human nature or a physical object: "The reality is produced starting from the smallest cells, matrices and storage devices, from management models - and can be replayed countless times. It does not need to be more rational, because it's not compared any longer with a certain, ideal or negative instance. It is only operational. Actually, it is not real anymore, because it does not envelop any imaginary things anymore. It's a hyperreal, synthetic product emitted by combinatorial models in airless hyperspace. This transition into the space, the curvature of which does not match the curvature of the reality or the curvature of truth half-opens the era of simulation through the liquidation of all references and worse: through its artificial resurrection in sign systems, in the material which is more flexible than meaning" [2, C. 5].

In naturalism consciousness and brain are understood as identical to each other. However, according to the American resuscitation specialist S. Man, mentality and consciousness is a type of physical interaction unknown to science, which is not necessarily produced by brain directly. Yes, the study of brain activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging taught specialists to see the connection between the activation of a particular area and certain thought

processes. But it does not solve the chicken and egg problem: whether electrochemical activity of cells generates thinking, or vice versa.

**Solving the Problem in Classical Philosophy:** Obviously, a transcendental component can't be taken away from the concept of consciousness in order to solve the problem of consciousness, in particular, the question of consciousness necessity for a man as it's absolutely impossible to talk about a person identity or self-consciousness without it because it is formed on the base of self-consciousness: "...the withdrawal of "Absolute" from theoretical institutionalization in a purely conceptual plane leads to a rapid erosion of identity concept. And if "absolute death" is understood metaphysically, but not in the sense of flat atheism, then it is clear that we are facing a serious, if not tragic conceptual problems: we are witnessing the beginning of time explosions, the Anschluss of consciousness by the unconscious, the disintegration of motivational complexes, the breaking of identification scenarios" [4, C. 66]. Philosophy has to abandon naturalism, suggesting something else, or go back to the way of the classical philosophical tradition of consciousness understanding established by G.V.F. Hegel to reject naturalism and sketchy, physicalistic understanding of consciousness. The returning of it, by the way, may not be the pullback to the classical variations of consciousness idea, but serve as the clarification and solution of the present state of affairs in philosophy. Let's consider the concept of consciousness presented by Hegel. In the "Encyclopedia of Philosophy" he writes that "consciousness has its metaphysics, its instinctive thinking, that our absolute power, which we can master only if we make it the object of our knowledge. Philosophy operates by quite different categories than normal consciousness; all the difference between different levels of education reduces to the difference of operated categories. All revolutions in science and in world history occur because the spirit strives to understand and hear itself, to own itself changing its categories and thus learning itself longer, deeper, more intimate and reaching a greater unity with itself" [3, C. 21].

Thus, according to Hegel, consciousness is the absolute power that is presented in the human being, due to which the being is present. It is not an analytical ability of a person on the relationship with reality and not a mechanism. It is a point of conjugation, the point of

meeting an individual with the being. In this respect, a self-cognition game is the game of strength, character and personality will. If there is not such a force or selfhood, then there will be no feelings, sensations, the experience of meeting with empirical reality, which must be able to have a constant intelligent conjugation.

**Radical Constructivism:** According to the constructivist theory of consciousness [6], the mind is a reservoir of subjective worlds reflected by subject. The reality itself is a discrete structure, because it is a complex system of objects affecting it. Therefore, the content of consciousness is multidimensional construct of cognitive semantic spaces. Consciousness does not exist apart from a body, just as there is no process of cognition without the process of life.

This methodological position "life is knowledge" was developed in the depths of radical constructivism theory by Chilean biologists U. Maturana and F. Varela. One of the qualitative characteristics of life, according to biologists, is the unity or integrity [10]. Consciousness does not exist by itself, but it's a property of a human body. It can not be considered separately from a man and his environment.

### CONCLUSION

Thus, we can draw some conclusions. First, the problem of consciousness in modern science remains unresolved because naturalism can not explain the nature of consciousness and many of its provisions are controversial. The main problem of consciousness study from the standpoint of naturalism is that consciousness has to be explained not through itself, but through something else: through the contact with reality, through senses, through neurons, etc. The following fact is not taken into account: the nature of such a complex mechanism as consciousness can't be revealed from neuron structure. Second, the desire to explain the nature of consciousness is realized by non-classical concept having a powerful heuristic potential in the issue of consciousness phenomenon interpretation or explanation. In any case, the consciousness issue solution should be based on philosophy, in the field of classical interpretations of consciousness phenomenon reconsideration.

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