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# The Connection Principle and the Classificatory Scheme of Reality

Óscar L. González-Castán

RESUMEN

El Principio de Conexión de Searle dice que "la adscripción de un fenómeno intencional inconsciente a un sistema implica que el fenómeno es en principio accesible a la conciencia [Searle (1990), p. 586]. En este trabajo quiero defender la tesis de que la teoría de la mente elaborada por Searle, y especialmente el Principio de Conexión, no ofrece una imagen coherente de los estados mentales inconscientes y, *a fortiori*, de la vida intencional en general.

ABSTRACT

Searle's Connection Principle says that "the ascription of an unconscious intentional phenomenon to a system implies that the phenomenon is in principle accessible to consciousness". In this paper I want to defend the thesis that Searle's theory of mind, and especially the Connection Principle, does not offer a coherent picture of unconscious mental states and, *a fortiori*, of the intentional life generally.

## INTRODUCTION

The problem with Searle's treatment of unconscious mental states is twofold. On the one hand, there is a metaphysical problem. Searle claims that there are unconscious mental states. But the states he attaches this label to appear in fact to be neural mechanisms that are capable of bringing about conscious mental states in particular circumstances. But we do not need to characterize these neural mechanisms as unconscious mental states. On the other hand, there is a conceptual problem. The very concept of an unconscious mental state involves a tension, possibly even a contradiction, which cannot simply be brushed aside; and Searle does not appear to use this concept in a precise way. I shall argue that the metaphysical problem with Searle's theory is due, at least partly, to the conceptual problem. So I agree with Fodor and Lepore when they say that the Connection Principle is harder to defend than Searle imagines [Fodor and Lepore (1994), p. 837]. But unlike Fodor and Lepore, I do not think that the difficulty is just one of squaring his doctrines with well-established experimental facts in the cognitive sciences.

## I. PROBLEMS WITH SEARLE'S CLASSIFICATORY SCHEME OF BRAIN STATES

According to Searle, the brain, and its various states and processes are all that there is to be found in the skull. These states and processes can be conscious or unconscious, and they can be mental or non-mental [Searle (1992), p. 161]. But, should we simply identify the mental states with the conscious states, and the non-mental states with the unconscious states? Searle's answer is that non-mental states are always unconscious states, but mental states are not always conscious ones.

According to Searle, non-mental brain states are neurophysiological states that cannot, under any circumstances, become mental, still less conscious. Searle calls these states "nonconscious" [Searle (1992), p. 154]. Examples of such states include the ones that are involved in regulating the movements of the heart and the respiratory system.

Once we have decided that non-mental states of the brain are nonconscious, we can turn to the question of whether all mental states are conscious. As I have said, Searle denies this. He argues that some mental states are unconscious.

Now according to Searle, we can distinguish between unconscious mental states which are, in principle, accessible to consciousness and unconscious mental states which are inaccessible in principle to consciousness. Searle calls the first kind "shallow unconscious" and the second kind "deep unconscious" [Searle (1992), p. 162].

Many philosophers are willing to defend the claim that there are deep unconscious mental states, because they believe that cognitive science is ontologically committed to them. According to these philosophers, one cannot explain the behaviour and many important psychological properties of complex organisms without postulating mental states, or at least representational states, which these organisms can *never* be introspectively, or directly, aware of. For example, some linguists say that there are representations of rules of grammar that speakers cannot be conscious of, but which need to be postulated to account for the ability to learn and understand natural languages. As Fodor has said, cognitive science is fun precisely because it is about discovering deeply unconscious mental states [Fodor (1987), p.15]. So you can become aware of the existence of these mental states by learning some cognitive science; but you cannot get to know about them by introspection.

With characteristic bravado, Searle challenges this key doctrine in the cognitive sciences; and his main reason for challenging it is that he also wants to challenge another doctrine that is closely related to it, namely, that intentionality can be detached from consciousness. The ultimate ambition of the cognitive sciences is to devise a theory of intentional mental states which disregards consciousness. But Searle believes that this is impossible, because

intentionality and consciousness are more intimately connected that the cognitive sciences have acknowledged. There are, he argues, conscious mental states which cannot be intentional; but there are no intentional states that cannot be conscious [Searle (1983), p. 2]. Hence, refuting the claim that there are deeply unconscious mental states means refuting the claim that intentionality can be detached from consciousness, and *vice versa*. The aim of the Connection Principle, the principle that "the ascription of an unconscious intentional phenomenon to a system implies that the phenomenon is in principle accessible to consciousness", is therefore to challenge these two theses that are implicit in the foundations of mainstream cognitive science. For if the Connection Principle is true, there are only two kinds of brain states with mental features: conscious mental states and unconscious mental states that are in principle accessible to consciousness.

Unfortunately, this apparently clear scheme appears to fall apart when we pay attention to the steps that support the Connection Principle. Step 5 says that "the ontology of unconscious mental states, at the time they are unconscious, consists *entirely* in the existence of purely neurophysiological phenomena.... When the states are totally unconscious, there is simply nothing there except neurophysiological states and processes" [Searle (1992), p. 159]. And Searle also says that "what goes on in the brain, other than consciousness, has an occurrent reality that is neurophysiological rather than psychological" [Searle (1992), p. 188]. But these claims seem to imply two different things. On the one hand, they imply that shallow unconscious mental states, at the time they are unconscious, are just like nonconscious, nonmental, neurophysiological states in many relevant respects. The ontology of nonconscious states is also entirely neurophysiological. On the other hand, it entails that shallow unconscious mental states are quite different from conscious mental states. Conscious states have one ontological characteristic that both shallow unconscious mental states and nonconscious states lack altogether, namely, subjectivity [Searle (1992), p. 93].

From these two implications we can derive two important problems that Searle needs to deal with. The first problem is this. If both shallow unconscious mental states, when they are unconscious, and nonconscious states are nothing but neurophysiological states occurring in neural architectures, and nonconscious states are not mental states, then, will it not also be the case that shallow unconscious mental states are not mental at the time they are unconscious? If this is so, then we should conclude that shallow unconscious mental states are not mental under given circumstances. And this seems to be a clear contradiction. This is a difficulty that Searle is well aware of. In his reply to Fodor and Lepore he says the following:

> So now our question about the ontology of the unconscious boils down to this: what fact about certain *nonconscious* neurobiological states and processes of the brain makes it true that there is a level of description of them at which they can be truly said to be unconscious mental states? [Searle (1994), p. 849] (my emphasis).

The second problem I mentioned above is this. Searle says that "much of the bankruptcy of most work in the philosophy of mind and a great deal of the sterility of academic psychology over the past fifty years, over the whole of my intellectual life, have come to terms with the fact that the ontology of the mental is an irreducibly first person ontology" [Searle (1992), p. 95]. But he has also defended the thesis that only conscious mental states and processes have this kind of ontology, for only they are subjective. Being thus, in what sense can he say that shallow unconscious mental states are really mental?

Searle's answer to all these problems is that some nonconscious, non-subjective brain processes are "in some sense" mental, while many others remain purely neurophysiological, without there being any possibility of them becoming mental [Searle (1990), p. 586]. The obvious question to ask here is this: in what sense, if any, can we say that some nonconscious states are, nevertheless, mental in some sense and, therefore, can truly be described as unconscious mental states, and, *a fortiori*, as really subjective? Furthermore, why can some of these brain states be regarded as mental whereas many others can never be considered as such?

Searle tries to solve these difficulties with a two-prong strategy. First, he makes use of what I shall call a descriptive psychology. And secondly, he makes use of an important doctrine which appears as Step 7 in the argument supporting the Connection Principle. I shall discuss the two parts of this strategy in turn.

## II. Unconsciousness and Aspectual Shape

The first part involves a descriptive psychology. I shall use this term in Bretano's sense. Brentano distinguishes between genetic psychology and descriptive psychology. He also calls this latter kind of psychology *Psychognosie* or pure psychology. Descriptive psychology is concerned with analyzing and categorizing conscious phenomena and their elements or parts, as they appear to us in introspection, and their forms of combination. Genetic psychology, on the other hand, is concerned with studying the physiological laws and conditions that govern the appearance and disappearance of these *Erscheinungen* or conscious phenomena [Brentano (1982)]. It seems to me that Searle's idea that we can describe the logical structure of intentional phenomena is very much like the idea that there is a descriptive psychology,

much like the idea that there is a descriptive psychology, in Brentano's sense [Searle (1992), p. 128].

The fact that Searle makes use of a descriptive psychology, or something rather like it, is important for the following reason. I shall argue that Searle defines the concept of a shallow unconscious mental state, but fails to prove that any states which conform to the definition actually exist. And I shall also argue that it is the influence of a descriptive psychology that makes Searle imagine that he has proved the existence of such states.

According to Searle's descriptive psychology, anything that we should consider as a mental state — whether conscious or unconscious — must have the following two features [Searle (1989), p. 197]:

> A. It must possess intrinsic intentionality and not merely *as if* intentionality. Only intrinsic intentionality is genuinely mental. This is Step 1 of Searle's argument for the Connection Principle. Searle believes that "the distinction is correct and that the price of giving it up would be that everything would become mental, because relative to some purpose or other anything can be treated *as if* it were mental" [Searle (1992), p. 156].
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> B. It must have aspectual shape. In fact, Step 3 of the argument for the Connection Principle says that "intrinsic intentional states, whether conscious or unconscious, always have aspectual shapes" [Searle (1992), p.156]. The aspectual shape of a mental state is the point of view under which that mental state represents an object or state of affairs. For example, one always sees a visible object from a certain perspective and with certain features, at a certain distance, with certain shades of color, and so on.

Now, Searle simply asserts that many neurophysiological states have intrinsic intentionality and preserve aspectual shape, despite being unconscious.

> There are plenty of unconscious phenomena [he says], but to the extent that they are genuinely *intentional*, they must in some sense preserve their aspectual shape even when unconscious [Searle (1992), pp. 159-60].

Step 6 of the argument for the Connection Principle summarizes these ideas in the following way: "the notion of an unconscious intentional state is the notion of a state that is a possible conscious thought or experience" [Searle (1992), p. 159].

Given that shallow unconscious mental states have intrinsic intentionality and preserve aspectual shape, they are mental states, appearances notwith-

standing. However, the problem with this argument is obvious. Searle's descriptive psychology may succeed in capturing something true and important about conscious mental states; but it does not follow that any unconscious neurophysiological states will match the template he has devised. Imagining that there must be such states, is like imagining that any time that you aim at a certain part of a room with your flashlight your are necessarily going to illuminate a piece of furniture but not an empty wall. Descriptive psychology just does not have these creative powers. If it had them, then it would be a trivial matter to establish the existence of any object. Any time you had a linguistic expression that looks like a real description and enumeration of some properties of an object, then that object would exist with these properties. We could prove that unicorns exist simply by defining a unicorn as a horse with a single horn in the middle of its forehead.

But, is this objection really convincing? There appears to be at least one direct and easy way in which Searle can defend the claim that shallow unconscious mental states exist. He does not need to *argue* that such states exist, for it is *evident* that they do. There are states that are *evidently* mental, despite being shallowly unconscious [Searle (1992), p. 154]. For example, "the belief that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris is a genuine mental state though it happens to be a mental state that most of the time is not present to consciousness [since you can be asleep or not reflecting on it right now]" [Searle (1992), p. 154]. This belief, under these circumstances, would undoubtedly be a shallow unconscious mental state.

Is this response to the criticism successful? I believe that it is not for two different reasons. The first one is that Searle's answer assimilates shallow unconscious mental states to what he calls a "pretheoretical notion of an unconscious mental state" [Searle (1992), p. 152]; that is, the idea of a "conscious mental state minus the consciousness" [*Ibid.*]. According to this pretheoretical notion, shallow unconscious mental states are, Searle says, like "objects stored in the dark attic of the mind. These objects have their shapes all along, even when you can't see them" [Searle (1992), p. 152]. In a similar way, shallow unconscious mental states seems to be like conscious states — both have aspectual shape and are intrinsically intentional —, but the former are unconscious while the latter are not. This is the case with the shallow unconscious belief "The Eiffel Tower is in Paris" in comparison to a conscious belief with the same content. Nevertheless, Searle rejects this way of characterizing shallow unconscious mental states, because it has various fanciful implications, such as that consciousness is a sort of flashlight that illuminates unconscious mental states [Searle (1992), p. 168].

The second problem with Searle's response to the objection is this. Everybody agrees that I do not stop believing that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris when I stop reflecting on this fact, or paying conscious attention to it, or

when I fall asleep. But it does not follow that attributing this belief to me in such circumstances, for example, when I am asleep, is attributing an actual, subjective, mental state to me, rather than attributing a neurophysiological state that will in certain circumstances produce the unquestionably mental state I am in when I consciously reflect on the fact that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris. And, as I shall argue later, there is no need for characterizing this kind of neurophysiological states as unconscious mental phenomena.

Before concluding this part, I should like to mention a separate problem with Searle's theory of unconsciousness. Brentano and Twardowski [Brentano (1973), Twardowski (1982)] draw attention to the distinction between an adjective with a modifying function and one with an attributive function. An adjective has a modifying function when we change, as it were, the nature of the object to which we apply the adjective. This is the case, for example, with the adjective "false" in the expressions "false diamond" and "false friend" or "fool's" in the expression "fool's gold". A false diamond is not a diamond, a false friend is not a friend, and fool's gold is not gold. An adjective has an attributive function, on the other hand, when we use it to ascribe qualities to an object. For example, "blue" and "red" are used in this way in the expressions "a blue T-shirt" and "a red T-shirt". Now, one way of challenging the Connection Principle is by asking whether the adjectives "conscious" and "unconscious", when applied to the more basic concept of a "mental state", have an attributive or a modifying function. I think that Searle would have to answer inconsistently that they have both functions.

On the one hand, it is clear that Searle often uses the adjectives "unconscious" and "conscious" in an attributive way [Searle (1984), p.16]. With this use in mind, we can classify mental states into two groups, just as we can sort blue and red T-shirts into two piles. On the other hand, the adjective "unconscious" also has a modifying function under given circumstances, because an unconscious mental state, at the time it is unconscious, is entirely a nonconscious neurophysiological process, and hence a non-mental, non-subjective, non-intentional state. Searle's own comment on this matter is as follows:

> The deepest of our mistakes, as often, are grammatical. We think that since "conscious mental states" and "unconscious mental states" are both referring expressions, there must be two types of objects they refer to, and that the difference between them is that, well, one is conscious, the other is unconscious [...] I am arguing that while the vocabulary by itself has a harmless use, the picture engendered by it is incoherent. In the skull there is just the brain with all its attendant apparatus. Sometimes the system is conscious, sometimes not. But that's it. There is nothing else. Talk of unconscious mental states is talk of the causal powers of the system [Searle (1994), P. 855].

In order to fully understand this passage we need to analyze the second strategy that Searle uses to prove that some non-psychological states of the brain are, nevertheless, mental.

## III. UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND CAUSALITY

This is Step 7 of Searle's argument for the Connection Principle:

> The ontology of the unconscious consists in objective features of the brain capable of causing conscious thoughts [Searle (1992), p. 160].

According to Searle's classification of brain states, this thesis amounts to the following. Some objective features of the brain are capable of *bringing about* subjective conscious thoughts while many others lack this capacity altogether. Hence, some states of the brain with no psychological reality in certain circumstances are in some sense mental, because they are features of the brain capable of *bringing about* subjective, conscious thoughts. It is this *causal* capacity of these brain states which makes them mental. And Searle conceives of this capacity as a dispositional property of the brain to *produce* conscious thoughts and conscious behaviour [Searle (1992), p. 161]. As we have seen, all these theses do not imply that these peculiar states will *become* conscious mental states sooner or later. They can be neurophysiological states forever. Being so, we cannot describe them as mental. Searle only says that these states have this causal capacity even though some obstacle (repression, brain damage, etc.) could hinder the full expression of this potentiality.

However, it seems that Searle is defending two different claims whose connection is far from being clear. Is he saying:

> (i) Unconscious mental states are states of the brain which can become conscious states; or
> (ii) Unconscious mental states are states of the brain which cause conscious states?

The first thesis can be interpreted so that we can join it to the idea that shallow unconscious mental states are accessible in principle to consciousness. When something or someone has access to these unconscious states, then they become mental. Nevertheless, this interpretation cannot be right, because it leads immediately to the following problem: what or who has access to these unconscious states? We already know that it cannot be consciousness, since this answer strongly suggests the false picture according to which consciousness is a sort of flashlight that illuminates unconscious mental states. But, if it is not consciousness, then what is it? Obviously, we will

not find any answer to this problem in Searle's theory of mind, because he thinks that the question is inappropriately designed from the outset.

Given that this first interpretation is mistaken, we could try a new one that helps us to connect (i) and (ii). A certain object or state of affairs becomes a new and different object or state of affairs when the first causes the second. For example, a seed becomes a tree because the seed causes the tree, *ceteris paribus*. In a parallel way, a shallow unconscious mental state becomes a conscious one, because it causes this conscious state, *ceteris paribus*. But, as Searle has said, these causal powers should be interpreted, firstly, as dispositional properties, and secondly, in such a way that we could tell a story about the circumstances that avoid their full expression.

Certainly, we need to meet all these requirements, but, at the same time, we should try to rule out this bizarre extension of his theory: a seed is an unconscious tree because it has the dispositional capacity to generate a tree, although some circumstances (a severe drought, a poor soil, etc.) could hinder its full development. One could defend that this extension is always possible, because there is nothing that obliges us to call certain brain states that cause conscious mental states "unconscious". If we choose to do this, then we need to give some compelling reasons for it. In the absence of such reasons — and Searle does not give any — , if we decide to call these brain states "unconscious", then we could also call all the intervening causes of a given effect "unconscious". However, this use of the term "unconscious" would be completely metaphorical and useless for Searle's purposes. He does not want to talk of unconscious mental states in a metaphorical way. This is what the content of step 2 of the Connection Principle expresses. There is nothing metaphorical or *as-if* about the attributions of shallow unconscious mental states to a person [Searle (1992), p. 156].

However, Searle might try to solve all these problems by saying that the "seed-tree model" does not provide the correct way of thinking about the dispositional properties of the brain to *produce* conscious thoughts. It is this incorrect model that has caused all the previous difficulties. Searle implicitly provides a new model when he explains what he understands by "potentiality". However, to be just, it is not his intention to provide this model, but to explain what a dispositional property is.

> There is no mystery about "potentiality" and "in principle" because I am using these notions in the familiar sense in which, for example, to say that something is poison, is not to say that it is actually poisoning anybody then and there, but that it has the potential to poison someone or that in principle it could poison someone, and those just mean that it has a causal structure which enables it to poison somebody [Searle (1994), p. 850].

According to this text, being a poison is a relational property that requires, on the one hand, a substance that has a certain chemical structure and, on the other hand, an animal with another chemical structure capable of being modified by that substance in a harmful way. In fact, some substances are poisons for some animals but not for others or, at least, not with the same violence. There are not poisons "in themselves".

Now, are shallow unconscious mental states like poisons? The answer should be negative. If we take seriously the "poison model" along with the relational analysis that I have provided of it, and we agree with Searle's thesis that conscious mental states are the causal outcomes of shallow unconscious mental states, then conscious mental states have to have, at least, two properties: firstly, they have to be the causal effect of shallow unconscious mental states and, secondly, they should be capable of being modified by these unconscious states. But these two properties are inconsistent. The chemical structure of the animal already exists independently of the existence of the poison. Such a structure is not the causal effect of the poison, although the poison can modify this structure with unpleasant consequences for the animal. This being so, the "poison model" for shallow unconscious mental states fails and we are back to the unpalatable model of the seed as an unconscious tree.

This latter argument brings to light a possible weakness in Searle's theory of mind. It does not explain how we can combine the idea that unconscious mental states are states of the brain which can become conscious states with the idea that unconscious mental states are states of the brain which cause conscious states. But there are other problems that are also related to the characterization of certain brain states as shallow unconscious mental states with certain causal powers.

Let's suppose, as Searle does, that token conscious thoughts are caused by, and realized in, token brain states and processes. We also know that shallow unconscious mental states are brain states that cause conscious thoughts. But, how can we identify and individuate the neurophysiological state that has brought about the conscious mental state, or the brain state in which this conscious mental state is realized, so that we could say that such neurophysiological state is precisely an unconscious mental state that preserves the same aspectual shape as the unquestionably conscious mental state it has caused? Furthermore, is there just only *one* neurophysiological state with this aspectual shape?

It is clear that the unconscious mental state we are looking for cannot be realized in the same token brain state in which the conscious mental state is realized. If this were the case, then we would not have an unconscious mental state that causes a conscious mental state, but just one single state, either conscious or unconscious. Being thus, if we have a clearly individuated

neurophysiological structure in which an unconscious mental state is realized, then that very same structure cannot harbor a conscious mental state without suffering any change in his neural organization or in his patterns of activation. But this thesis, which Searle is committed to, is highly destructive for his purposes. The main obstacle consists in explaining the changes that have to occur in a neural organization so that such changes bring about a new neural organization in which a conscious thought is realized. It is highly plausible to believe that such changes have to be caused, at least in part, by another neural organization or, more simply, by another brain state. But if this is so, then how do we know that this other brain state is not the one that is capable of causing the conscious mental state we were looking for? And what is more important, how can we answer this problem without begging the question, that is, without supposing that it is the first brain state but not the second, which has caused the conscious mental state? But if we decide that both are equally responsible, then how many unconscious mental states are there with the same aspectual shape that the conscious mental state they have caused? Searle does not provide us with any tool to solve all these problems.

Obviously, nothing would be different if we decided to talk about changes in the pattern of activation of a certain neural organization as being the causes of a conscious mental thought. For then, how do we know that a certain stage in that pattern of activation, and not a different one, is the pattern which realizes the shallow unconscious mental state that brings about the conscious mental state?

## IV SOME NEW PROBLEMS

So far I have tried to argue that the concept of shallow unconscious mental state is problematic and not clear cut. I have also argued that the metaphysical problem about the existence of this kind of states is partly due to conceptual ambiguities. I would like to buttress this point now with a final consideration.

Searle talks very often in a way that forces us to abandon the idea of accessibility to unconscious mental states as if they had or preserved aspectual shape. For he says that "*there is no aspectual shape at the level of the neurons*. So the only fact about the neurophysiological structures that corresponds to the ascription of intrinsic aspectual shape is the fact that the system has the causal capacity to produce conscious states and processes where those specific aspectual shapes are manifest" [Searle (1992), p. 161]; my emphasis. As I have already said, this last assertion seems to imply, contrary to what Searle has argued many times, that shallow unconscious mental states

are not mental at the time they are unconscious, since mental states should always have or preserve aspectual shape and intrinsic intentionality. Here we have a clear case in which the adjective "unconscious" has a modifying function.

But if Searle allows room for describing shallow unconscious mental states as non-mental and non-subjective at the time they are unconscious, then what are they? Searle's unsurprising answer is the following:

> When you make a claim about unconscious intentionality, there are no facts that bear on the case except neurophysiological facts. There is *nothing else* there except neurophysiological states and processes describable in neurophysiological terms [Searle (1992), p. 161].

Accordingly, unconscious intentionality has nothing to do with mental states of any kind, but rather with neurophysiological states whose ontology in not subjective. This being so, our former worries return: in what sense are these states intentional or, even more, intrinsically intentional? How is it that we can also describe them as mental states?

It seems to be case that all the troubles we have had answering these perplexing questions have their origin in a fundamental misconception of the nature of the mind. We have been portraying the mind as if it were "an inventory of mental states, some conscious, some unconscious" [Searle (1992], p. 187]. Once again, "both language and culture tend to force this picture on us" [*Ibid.*]. It forces this picture even on Searle who is well-aware that it is a false one. However, if we have to leave for good the idea that there are shallow unconscious mental *states* — for example, unconscious beliefs —, but we need to keep the idea of unconscious intentionality, what kind of thing is unconsciousness? Searle gives two related answers. It is probably a mechanism and surely a neural structure.

Searle does not say explicitly that unconsciousness is a mechanism. But we can draw this conclusion from the following reasoning. When he tries to offer a model that could replace the idea that mental states are like the items of a list located somewhere in the mind/brain, or, as a functionalist would metaphorically say, as objects that are in certain boxes in the mind (the belief-box, the desire-box, the memory-box, and so on), then he talks about mechanisms. For example, he says the following about memory:

> We think of memory as a storehouse of propositions and images, as a kind of library or filing cabinet of representations. But we should think of memory rather as a mechanism for generating current performance, including conscious thoughts and actions, based on past experience [Searle (1992), p. 187].

Hence, if unconsciousness is not a repertoire of mental states in the same way that memory is not a filing cabinet of representations, then it is

very probably a kind of mechanism, or a set of them, that has the causal capacity of producing conscious mental states.

But how should we understand these mechanisms? They will probably have certain states. Are these states unconscious mental states or describable as such? Searle's answer is negative.

> Even when Jones is asleep, we say that he believes Bush is president and that he knows the rules of grammar. So we think lying in there in his brain, sleeping too, are his belief that Bush is president and his knowledge of French. But in fact all his brain contains is a set of neural structures, whose workings at present are largely unknown, that enable him to think and act, when he gets around to it. Among many other things, they enable him to think that Bush is president and to speak French [Searle (1992), pp. 187-188].

There are no unconscious beliefs *per se* that we can characterize as being unconscious mental states, but a set of neural structures that probably function as a mechanism that is able to bring about conscious mental states.

However, thisconclusion goes against Searle's insistence that there are such unconscious beliefs. In fact, as we have seen, the idea that this kind of beliefs undoubtedly exist is one of the main motivations that led Searle to propose a theory of unconsciousness that could be presented as a serious alternative to the existence of deep unconscious mental states as they are postulated by cognitive science [Searle (1992), p. 154].

But now it seems to be the case that talking about unconscious beliefs boils down to the thesis that there are neural structures that bring about conscious mental states. Clearly, this answer is something that nobody in the philosophy of mind or in cognitive science would deny. But if this is all that Searle can offer as a radical alternative to these theories, then it is not very interesting and, certainly, not very new.

After all these reflections, my conclusion follows. Searle does not have any coherent picture of unconscious mental states to offer — or whatever it is what we have to say about these states. And when we try to get a coherent picture out of his theory, then his proposal seems to be not very far reaching. Being thus, Searle still needs to provide a general picture of the intentional life that could counterbalance the mainstream cognitive science and philosophy of mind and, especially, the idea that there are deep unconscious mental states. Furthermore, he needs to revise his examples of unconscious mental states in order to know if there are such states. A revision of mental causation is also necessary[1].

*Departamento de Historia I y Filosofía*
*Universidad de Alcalá*
*C/ Colegios 2, E-28801 Madrid*

*E-mail: oscarl.gonzalez@alcala.es*

NOTES

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