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Emergent Mechanisms

Reductive Explanation for Limited Beings

Author: Ramiro Glauer

Is our mind explainable in terms of neural mechanisms? How we conceive of ourselves seems strongly to depend on how we respond to this question. In the present work an attempt at an affirmative answer is made. Currently, there are good reasons to believe that we can give a neural-mechanical explanation of how our mind works. In order to show this, first, a concept of mechanistic explanation is developed that is applicable to biological cognitive systems. This accommodates the fact that biological systems are usually complex, integrated systems that cannot be decomposed into a relatively small number of working parts like a clockwork. Complex biological mechanisms exhibit emergent behavior. The complexity of biological systems can be tackled with the aid of a number of methods of analysis. Models of a whole human brain are, for instance, well in reach that can be used to find integrated mechanistic explanations of cognitive capacities. Mind would thus be qualitatively reducible to neural mechanisms.

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