What can neuroscience do for philosophy?

4pm Thurs May 6th 2021 Zoom Meeting ID: 919 0958 0172 Passcode: 141277

https://cwru.zoom.us/j/91909580172?pwd=MUpYMDVkZnpEM2tOYXNrN3U3cVkyUT09

The seminar will explore work-in-progress by Tony Jack, Associate Professor of Philosophy. Tony is currently working on a book, “The mind’s essential tension,” based on his 20 years of experience doing cutting-edge neuroscience research. The book integrates neuroscience with work in psychology and philosophy in a way that has potential to inform how we think about and do philosophy.

Following an initial presentation, the seminar will focus on discussing implications for philosophy. Consider how you might answer one or more of the following questions:

**Big questions in Analytic philosophy**

1. Can science solve the problem of **consciousness**? If so, why hasn’t there been better progress? If not, why does human experience evade scientific description?
2. Is a scientific (i.e. determinism/quantum randomness) world view consistent with the notions of **free will** and moral responsibility that we seem to rely upon to act in the world?
3. What should a theory of ethical action look like: **deontological** or **consequentialist**? How should we respond to apparent conflicts between these distinct approaches to ethics?
4. How important is **coherence**? Might our ways of understanding the world be incommensurable? If there are inconsistencies and/or gaps in human understanding, how should philosophy respond?
5. Is **akrasia** possible i.e. can you believe action A is better than B while doing B instead of A?

**Analytic vs Continental Philosophy**

Philosopher Simon Critchley claims Analytic philosophy tends to scientism (and thus shallowness about the human condition), whereas Continental philosophy tends to obscurantism (i.e. incomprehensible).

6. Does Critchley’s caricature ring true? Would you sketch the two traditions in a different way?
7. Is Analytic philosophy guilty of **scientism**? If so, what examples do you find most compelling? If not, do you think there are any limits to science?
8. Is Continental philosophy guilty of **obscurantism**? If so, why do you think this is a consistent feature of so many continental schools? If not, please come prepared to provide an accessible explanation of phenomenology, existentialism and deconstructionism ;)
9. Do you agree with Dewey that all philosophy is (or should be) philosophy of education? What are the limits of ‘book’ learning? Should philosophy put more emphasis on **experiential learning**?