

HYPOTHESES IN NEUROSCIENCE ABOUT THE ROLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PRODUCTION OF ACTION AND THE AGENT CAUSATION THEORY

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The Agent Causation Theory offers a concept of agency that aims at accounting for our feeling that we originate and control our actions spontaneously, which is attributed by some theories to the agent's causal power. The idea that the agent may directly cause his actions has some critics, who point out that this thesis involves a *sui generis* kind of causation and, therefore, is an unacceptable explanation for action production. However, this might not be the only criticism to the Agent Causal approach. New discoveries in neuroscience have been shedding light in some action production issues and putting some traditional action explanations in question. The Agent Causation Theory seems to suggest that some degree of consciousness, or at least some awareness, is involved in the agent's directly bringing about what he does, yet there is evidence that consciousness is not at the basis of action production; although, there is room for controversy about whether it has no role at all in its production. Recent neuroscience experiments, like Stephan Bode's "Tracking the Unconscious Generation of Free Decisions Using Ultra-High Field" (2011) and Daniel Wegner's book "The Illusion of Conscious Will" (2003), propose an interpretation of experimental evidence that denies the hypothesis that consciousness might have a significant role in originating action. In fact, the major role in action production is played by unconscious brain activities, as understood by Bode and Wegner. Therefore, it is in the interest of action theories, as well as of the conception of agency itself, to take research in neuroscience and its findings into consideration, in order to benefit from discoveries in this field to improve our understanding of action and of its generation. This may, however, mean that some traditional hypotheses need to be abandoned.