

Response, Responsiveness, Responsibility. A paradigm shift from Brainhood to Personhood

Roberta Gambardella (Pontificia Università Lateranense)

The research that structures and orients this work proposal aims to overcome the stimulus-response model in neuroscience, to introduce a new interpretative paradigm of cerebral dynamism at the micro-meso-macroscopic level such as to involve the entire human person. We call this model responsiveness; it is not simply a neuroscientific approach but a neuro-ethics one (like the neuroscience of ethics) that goes beyond the limits of the linear stimulus (cause) – response (effect) model whose limit is to be epistemologically representationalist, not to anthropologically grasp the mind-body relationship and, ethically, to consider acting a physicalist determinism. Responsiveness, on the other hand, does not exclude causality but replaces linear causality with a circular (W.J. Freeman, 1999) and nonlinear causality typical of complex and open systems such as the human brain. Responsiveness is based on a triadic model: stimulus – self-organization – response characterized by relations of variability whereby the coherence to a response starting from an input depends on the fact that the body does not simply absorb environmental stimuli, but changes its form (self-organization) to become similar to stimuli and respond with a view to an end. In this non-linear, dynamic, and complex structure, the state of self-organization is typical of an intentional epistemology. Responsiveness, in fact, makes entanglement possible, i.e. the relationship with the surrounding environment, inside and outside the human being, an ethical environment/habitus that in conscious action implies ethical responsibility. Responsiveness is that homeostatic and intentional movement that from the neuro-biological reaches the highest and most conscious level of responsibility towards an otherness.