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Is The Unconscious “Smart,” or “Dumb?” And If It’s Smart, How Smart Is It? : One More Time---With Feeling.

Abstract

Empirical, conceptual, and methodological issues involved in assessing the analytical power of unconscious processes are examined in light of reviews asking the question: Is the unconscious smart or dumb? It is suggested that among many theoretical differences, the discrepancy between what may be characterized as a more molar approach using everyday and clinical type phenomena on the one hand, and a more cognitive science, molecular approach using simple memorial and perceptual stimuli and stringent laboratory procedures on the other, lead to different answers to the question. Those advocating a more molar approach emphasize the importance of knowledge-base, affective and personally meaningful stimuli, presented with longer exposure times, all of which enable a more appropriate cognitive encoding process, thus leading to different findings bearing on the question. A specifically developed cognitive and linguistic non metric methodology that incorporates affective, personally meaningful stimuli in real-time durations are presented. Findings suggest that the analytic power of what are called unconscious processes is more sophisticated than previous molecular and laboratory research has indicated, though not as sophisticated as some claim, and calls for further research using this methodology to shed new light on the question, Is the unconscious smart or dumb?