



**The British
Psychological Society**
History of Psychology Centre

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

Date: Monday 11 December 2017

Location: SELCS Common Room (G24), Foster Court, Malet Place, University College
London

Speaker: Professor Fernando Vidal (Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies
and Centre for the History of Science, Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Seminar title: Being Brains: Making the Cerebral Subject

Abstract: Are we our brains? Starting in the ‘Decade of the Brain’ of the 1990s, ‘neurocentrism’ became widespread in most Western and many non-Western societies. Formidable advances, especially in neuroimaging, have bolstered this neurocentrism in the eyes of the public and political authorities, helping to justify increased funding for the brain sciences. The human sciences have also taken the ‘neural turn’, and subspecialties in fields such as anthropology, aesthetics, education, history, law, sociology and theology have grown and professionalised at record speed. At the same time the development of dubious but successful commercial enterprises such as ‘neuromarketing’ and ‘neurobics’ have emerged to take advantage of the heightened sensitivity to all things neuro. Sceptics have only recently begun to react to the hype, invoking warnings of neuromythology, neurotrash, neuromania and neuromadness. While this neurocentric view of human subjectivity is neither hegemonic nor monolithic, it embodies a powerful ideology that is at the heart of some of today’s most important philosophical, ethical, scientific and political debates. *Being Brains* critically explores the internal logic of such ideology, its genealogy and its main contemporary incarnations.