



The Consciousness and Experiential Psychology Section
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Reconstructing
Consciousness,
Mind and Being
Abstracts

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Conference Theme

Recent advances in consciousness studies have led to a more sophisticated understanding of how consciousness and mind relate to the brain and how all of these contribute to embodied being in the world. To some extent however, increasing sophistication has been accompanied by fragmentation, and modern understanding has not settled questions which have been the subject of ancient debates. Debates continue about the nature and function of consciousness, about the relation of consciousness to mind, about the relation of consciousness and mind to brain, and about the relation of all these to embodied being. These issues are of practical as well as theoretical interest.

Fragmentation in our understanding of the human condition can contribute to difficulties in self-integration and action that can pose problems that are both personal and social. In the present conference we sample some analyses of the problems and some of the proposals for integration, which vary widely. Contributions vary, for example, in terms of whether they take a dominantly third-person approach, a dominantly first-person approach, or a combination of these. Papers also vary in whether they take the function of the brain, embodiment in the world, consciousness, or a mix of these to be fundamental, and therefore either reducible or not reducible to each other.

Although the conference can only hope to expose the issues rather than settle them, it is structured to have a beginning, in the form of a plenary workshop on the problems (Friday), a middle (the bulk of the papers) and an end, in the form of a debate/discussion on the Sunday in which protagonists of different views can engage with each other and the conference as a whole.

Conference organising committee:

Max Velmans (Conference Chair, CEP Chair)

Jane Aspell (Submissions)

Guy Saunders (Registrations, CEP Hon. Treas.)

Lesley Graham (Graphic design & IT, CEP Hon. Sec.)

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Thomas Metzinger

Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz

Consciousness, the Phenomenal Self, and the First-Person Perspective

In my contribution I will offer a solution to the most difficult aspect of the problem of consciousness: The subjectivity of subjective experience, the fact that consciousness is always experienced from an individual first-person perspective. If one wishes to understand what phenomenal consciousness actually is, one of the most important explananda will be what Thomas Nagel has called the "perspectivalness" of consciousness: The fact that conscious experience always appears to be experience for an experiencing ego, being bound to a subjective first-person perspective.

I first very briefly sketch the background theory as a strategy of accommodating the perspectivalness of consciousness within an empirically plausible theory of mental representation. An important step in adopting this strategy will consist in introducing a new theoretical entity: The phenomenal self-model. The model of the self differs from every other mental model in an essential point. It possesses a part, which is exclusively based on internally generated input: the part of the body image activated by proprioceptive input. For instance, recent research concerning the pain experienced in phantom limbs seems to point to the existence of a genetically determined neuromatrix whose activation patterns could be the basis of the body image and the subjective experience of embodiment. The part of this neural activation pattern which is independent of external input produces a continuous representational basis for the body model of the self and in this way anchors it in the brain by generating a persistent functional link. In almost all situations when there is phenomenal consciousness at all, there also exists this unspecific, internal source of input. It is the most "certain" and stable region within the model of the self. In this way our consciousness becomes a centered consciousness.

However, in order for the functional/representational property of centeredness to become the phenomenal property of perspectivalness, the model of the

system must become a phenomenal self. The pivotal question is: How does that which we commonly call the phenomenal first-person perspective emerge in a centered representational space? A first-person perspective - I would suggest - emerges if the system no longer recognizes the model of the self which it itself activated as a model. If it did, representational and functional centeredness would remain, but the global phenomenal properties of selfhood and perspectivalness would disappear. In short: the system would have a self-model, but no phenomenal self. The representational correlate - the self-model - is a functional module, episodically activated by the system in order to regulate its interaction with the environment. One can also develop a "teleofunctionalist" approach: The model of the system then appears as a kind of organ which emerges through the binding of a certain set of micro-functional properties and enables the system to represent itself in its environment to itself. So the self-model is a transient computational module, possessing a long biological history: It is a weapon, which was developed in the course of a "cognitive arms-race" (Andy Clark, 1989). A real phenomenal self however, only emerges if the system, metaphorically speaking, "confuses" itself with the internal model of itself which it itself has generated. I claim that the activation of a transparent self-model is the most important necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the instantiation of what philosophers like to call the "first-person perspective": While activating a special type of representational object, the system gets caught in a naive-realistic self-misunderstanding and in this way generates a phenomenal subject. If time allows, I want to close by briefly investigating what further constraints have to be met in order for a phenomenal first-person perspective to lay the foundations for social cognition: How do we get from a consciously represented first-person perspective to the cognitive representation of a first-person plural perspective?

References:

For readers interested in an English summary of the theory sketched above I recommend the following two publications:

Metzinger, T. (2005). Précis of "Being No One". In *PSYCHE - An Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Consciousness*, 11 (5), 1-35.

<<http://psyche.cs.monash.edu.au/symposia/metzinger/precis.pdf>>

Metzinger, T. (2003). *Being No One - The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

For readers interested in the third part of my lecture or in a general introduction into the problem of consciousness I recommend the following two publications:

Metzinger, T. (2000). Introduction: Consciousness Research at the End of the Twentieth Century. In T. Metzinger, ed., *Neural Correlates of Consciousness: Empirical and Conceptual Questions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Metzinger, T. (1995). *Conscious Experience*. Thorverton: Imprint Academic & Paderborn: mentis.

The first one can be downloaded for free from my website at <http://www.philosophie.uni-mainz.de/metzinger/>

Richard Bentall

University of Manchester

Madness Explained

Research into psychosis has been dominated by a paradigm introduced in the late 19th Century by Emil Kraepelin and others, which makes three assumptions: (i) there is a clear dividing line between madness and sanity; (ii) there is not one type of psychosis but several separate disorders (schizophrenia, manic depression, delusional disorder); and (iii) these disorders are best understood as diseases of the nervous system. The evidence against these assumptions is now so considerable that it cannot be ignored. Moreover, the paradigm has failed to deliver humane treatments for people suffering from psychiatric problems.

A new approach to understanding psychosis is now emerging, which focuses on specific types of behaviour and experience (what psychiatrists term 'symptoms') rather than broad diagnoses. This approach will be illustrated by reference to research on paranoid delusions and hallucinations. Recent findings suggest that each of these types of experience is a consequence of

different developmental pathways which are influenced by specific environmental hazards (trauma in the case of hallucinations; chronic victimization in the case of paranoid beliefs). An account of this kind does away with the need for diagnoses such as schizophrenia. It also facilitates an approach to psychiatric treatment that is more humane and respectful than the Kraepelinian approach.

Ravi Ravindra

Dalhousi University

Knowing with the mind and knowing through the mind

It is often assumed that there are different approaches in the East and the West to the understanding of consciousness and mind. However, I do not believe that the major distinction is between East and West. In my judgment, the major distinction is between a spiritual (both East and West) and a philosophical-scientific (again both East and West) approach. In general, these days when we, who are situated in the Western intellectual atmosphere, think of the East, we conjure up the classical texts and the sages such as the Yoga Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and Shankara, but when we think of the West, what we have in mind are contemporary discussions in the fields of philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, and consciousness studies; we don't think of John's Gospel or of St. Paul or St. Simian the Theologian. The Buddha, Krishna and the Christ have much more in common with each other, as do Shankara and Eckhart than they are likely to have with the contemporary philosophers and psychologists, either in the East or in the West.

The spiritual and the philosophical-scientific approaches place a very different emphasis on the mind. It is not too simplistic to say that in the former approach, the mind (even the finest one) has to be quieted, whereas in the later approach, the mind plays a very active role as a producer of hypotheses and explanations or as a judge of data and evidence, etc. The knowledge obtained in the spiritual mode is transpersonal, whereas the knowledge discovered in the scientific mode is interpersonal.

Although similar perspectives can be elaborated in the context of all spiritual disciplines, this paper will focus on Yoga as an example of the spiritual mode

of knowing and being. According to both the theory and the practice of Yoga, the mind is not the knower. The real knower--and it is better to use the word 'seer' because of the nature of direct perception involved in the kind of knowing spoken of here--is above the mind and knows through the mind and not with the mind. The major expression of ignorance according to Yoga Sutras of Patañjali is the misidentification of the Seer (Purusha) with the mind which is an instrument of perception. Purusha is the dweller in the bodymind but it is not the bodymind, nor of it. The capital 'S' in Seer indicates the supra-personal nature of It, as contrasted with a personal seer.

The sole function and characteristic of Purusha is seeing. It is only a linguistic habit which leads to the translation of Purusha as Seer, leading to the impression that the purpose of Yoga is a dualistic one, resulting in the separation of the Seer (Purusha, Spirit, Consciousness, Subject) from the seen (chitta, world, bodymind, object). In practice yoga aims at the cleansing of perceptions which is possible only as an aspirant is freed from fear and self-importance. Only when the heart is clear, can the mind be quiet. Purified senses, heart and mind together constitute the appropriate instrument of pure Seeing without the separation of the seer and the seen. Such seeing or knowing is transformative of being. In a spiral fashion, the searcher is transformed a little - i.e., is less burdened by fear and self-importance -- and sees a little more impartially and objectively (not inter-subjectively as in the sciences); that deeper seeing in its turn brings about a further transformation which allows for a yet deeper seeing, until seeing alone remains, without any separate seer or seen.

Session A

Steve Torrance and Hanne de Jaegher

Middlesex University and University of Sussex

The experience of autism: An enactive approach

We propose to look at autism within an enactive framework. First, we discuss some work already done in this area (Hobson 2002; Klin et al. 2003; Gallagher 2004) and the enactive approach in general. Some enactivist characteristics of cognisers: a cogniser is a mind embodied in a self-organising and self-maintaining biological organism. Cognition is meaning-generation and arises from the embodied, sensorimotor coupling between organism and environment, including the social environment. The organism's experiential awareness of its self and world is a central feature of its lived embodiment in the world. Then we discuss two outcomes of this proposal: (1) An enactive approach to autism deepens the enactive view itself, through an examination of the close interrelation between social and perceptual capacities. (2) The enactive view has potential for shedding new light on autism and on explanatory theories of the latter, by taking seriously a participative method of investigation centred on experience.

Christoph Prainsack

Department of Psychology, University of Vienna

Emotional meaning and the non-conceptual foundations of experience

Theories of emotion often construe emotional reactions as responses to an event's meaning. Although they usually do not define it further, they seem to use the term differently than the philosophy of language or mind. Specifically, in the context of emotion, meaning is not about how a mental state refers to an object, but about how person and environment relate. Emotional meaning expresses the conjunction of person and environment in relationship: it depends on both the consequences of an event for the person and what she is able to do about it. Thus, meaning describes the basic structure of a

relationship of person and environment constraining each other; as emotional experience is the relationship's subjective side, this structure is intrinsic to it as well. It is possible to extend this analysis to experience in general, of which emotion is a special case, which may complement representational models of the mind.

Session B

Susan Stuart

Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute, University of Glasgow

The binding problem and how information that is distributed across the brain is integrated into one unitary conscious experience

My concern is with the binding problem and how information that is stored across the brain is integrated into one unitary conscious experience. I will draw together the common themes from a diverse body of work that addresses this issue including Cotterill's neurophysiological approach, Kantian metaphysics, Sloman's cognitive architecture theory, Aleksander and Dunmall's engineering approach that entails the integration of cognitive faculties into architectures, and robotics. Fundamental to each of these approaches are the notions of embodiment, animation, perception, and imagination, and, in turn, each of these notions requires a system that has the ability (i) to bind its experiences as experience for it, (ii) to order and tag its experience temporally if it is to be able to plan ahead and direct its attention in an effort to sustain its existence, and (iii) to employ some element of affective processing that raises preferences and provides the system with a will to act.

Charles Whitehead

Department of Anthropology, University College London

Wellcome Department of Imaging Neuroscience, University College London

Harrow School of Computer Science, University of Westminster

Self-consciousness and Social Display

A central problem in the behavioural sciences is the absence of any coherent theory defining human behaviour. The problem is not one of simple ignorance but of active falsification - 'collective deceptions' were at one time necessary to coerce our social but selfish ancestors into collaborating in a non-selfish

system, and western science has not yet freed itself from them. One promising solution is social mirror theory, which holds that self-consciousness depends on social display. Human displays are of three types - communication, play, and performance - and come in at least three modes - implicit, mimetic, and conventional. This goes further than any other theory in making sense of human behaviour and the peculiar anatomy and evolution of the modern human brain. It also illumines the workings of collective deceptions - those distorting mirrors whose political machinations falsify our views of ourselves and of reality.

Vere Smyth

Senior Scientific Advisor, Ministry of Health, New Zealand

The question of consciousness - is it worth asking?

This paper takes a fresh look at the question of what consciousness is. It begins by postulating the essential characteristics of a sentient entity to allow it to survive in a competitive external environment. Then in this context I ask whether there is anything to be gained from attempting to determine objectively whether such an entity is conscious or not. A similar analysis sheds new light on the old problems of qualia, zombies, being "like a bat", and free will. The argument leads to the conclusion that we strive to give these concepts reality using contrived philosophical reasoning more to satisfy a cultural need than in search of any objective truth.

Session A

Max Velmans

Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths College, University of London

The Function of Consciousness in the Realisation of Being

The function of consciousness is an enduring puzzle for science. Within cognitive psychology consciousness has been thought, at one time or another, to add something essential to most mental functions ranging from those that deal with input, storage, and information transformation to output. However careful analysis of the role of conscious phenomenology in such mental functions suggests that the relevant processes generally operate before that phenomenology arises (in humans) and can operate whether or not that phenomenology arises (for example, in machines). However, mental functions are to some extent represented in conscious phenomenology and recent functional analyses have focused on the functional relationships that are evident in such phenomenology. Thomas Metzinger for example gives a detailed analysis of the way one's sense of being a self in the world might be the product of a phenomenal self-model located within a model of the world encoded in the brain. This ability to distinguish self from other provides an evolutionary advantage, and according to Metzinger, phenomenal consciousness of self and world arises when such models are "transparent", i.e. when an organism does not know that these mental models are just models and mistakes them for a real self in a real world. In the present paper I assess the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. I conclude that while such functional analysis of phenomenology provides an understanding of underlying functional relationships, it do not explain either the existence of the accompanying phenomenology or its functional role. An alternative is to move towards a nonreductive understanding of the brain function/phenomenology relationship, where it is recognised that entities and events become subjectively real when they become conscious, taking the form of experienced or observed phenomena. Rather than such phenomena being reducible to third-person science they provide the empirical ground of such science.

Herman C.D.G. de Regt

Faculty of Philosophy, Tilburg University

Science, Consciousness, and the Human Body: A Pragmatist Perspective

Max Velmans (2000) argues that we will never understand what it is that constitutes consciousness and he defends a panpsychist view: as a matter of fact with the birth of the universe consciousness emerged as well.

Remarkably, in the work of C.S. Peirce (1891, 1892) we already encounter the same strand of thought! Despite the similarities between Velmans' and Peirce's scientific approach to consciousness I would like to argue that both get it wrong, yet Peirce's pragmatism might just contain the elements we need to argue that (1) the science of consciousness can be complete, and that (2) the idea of consciousness can only become clear to us if we emphasize the relations between organisms, their environment, and the bodily principles of habit-taking.

Patrick Renault

Centre for Theoretical and Empirical Consciousness Studies

Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen

Elementism Rebottled? Troubles with 'the New Science of Consciousness'

This paper targets perhaps the prevailing attempt to establish a new programmatic science of consciousness. Most importantly, I suggest that (1) 'the new science of consciousness', sometimes referred to as 'the matching-content doctrine' (Noë & Thompson 2004) has significant similarities with the programmatic outlines of an empirical psychology put forward, a century ago by Titchener, Kulpë, and Wundt. In fact, all these programmatic scientific suggestions are based on a common fundamental commitment to some version of 'elementism', reaching back, at least, to Locke. Elementism might be stated as the assumption that it is phenomenologically adequate to dissolve actual conscious experience into simple determinate atomistic elements, be it impressions or images, somehow gradually compoundable into 'snapshots' and actual dynamical conscious activity. However, I also intend to indicate that (2) elementism suffers from a variety of problems and phenomenological

implausibilities. Finally (3) I also criticize the doctrine for a one-sided strive toward an unproductive 'metaphysical psychology'.

Uziel Awret

Affiliation - "Science and Consciousness Review"

Complementarity and Consciousness, Reconstruction versus Deconstruction

In this paper I will try and show that different interpretations of quantum mechanics in general and Bohr's complementarity principle in particular constrain the formulation of our theories of consciousness and can result both in the 'reconstruction of consciousness' and the 'deconstruction of consciousness'. The paper will begin by distinguishing between two common ways in which the term 'complementarity' is currently used corresponding alternatively to ontological and non ontological interpretations of QM. I suggest that both non-reductive physicalism and dual aspect theories of consciousness are commensurate with an ontological interpretation of QM like Bohm's ontological theory, but not with the Copenhagen interpretation and Bohr's complementarity principle. The question that I wish to consider is whether the more radical anti-ontological notion of complementarity can contribute to the consciousness debates. How would rejecting physical realism (and the existence of any kind of objective reality as a final ground in a rather paradoxical brand of 'materialistic anti-realism') shape a possible future theory of consciousness? The paper will proceed with Arkady Plotnitsky's discovery that QM is an example of a broader class of theories which he terms 'general economic anti-epistemology'. This theoretical framework is especially well suited for formulating theories of consciousness that are constrained by the rejection of physical realism. Plotnitsky shows that general economy is complementary and that complementarity is general economic. This enables us to describe QM and complementarity as an example of George Bataille's general economy in which representation always entails an irreducible and non-recuperable loss in representation and meaning. That loss itself cannot be represented. According to Bataille an improvement in representation also entails a corresponding refinement and deepening of the irreducible loss entailed by that representation. The paper will thus conclude that embracing

the Copenhagen interpretation of QM may force us to associate consciousness with the irreducible loss in meaning and representation entailed by improvements to our 'physicalism'. On that account Chalmers's hard problem is a more refined form of the 'unknowledge' or non-savoir traditionally associated with the mind-body problem.

Roxana Baiasu

Manchester Metropolitan University/ University of Manchester

Understanding Being: Self-consciousness and Silence

The paper proposes a phenomenological reconstruction of certain aspects of what it means to have an understanding of Being and how this is essentially related to self-consciousness. The reconstruction is undertaken through a critical reading of Heidegger's approach to these issues in Being and Time. More specifically, I argue against Heidegger's claim that understanding and discursiveness are co-original, presupposing each other in the constitution of human encountering of what there is. I suggest that discursiveness is more basic in the sense that is a necessary condition of possibility for an articulated understanding. The argument focuses on the individualising understanding of the Self and the silent discursiveness which articulates this understanding. Insofar as through this understanding human existence comes into the closest relationship to Being, silencing is an essential aspect of what it means to have an understanding of Being. This undermines Heidegger's prioritising of time in his early philosophy of Being.

Richard Sykes

WHO Collaborating Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, University of London

The distinction between mental and physical disorder. Redefine or discard?

The distinction between physical and mental disorder is firmly embedded in medical practice and in general use and it has important consequences for patients. But, despite its importance, no satisfactory account of the distinction has yet been provided.

One major problem is that there are no obvious features by which neurological disorders can be distinguished from some mental disorders. A further problem

is that the distinction encourages the "psychogenic fallacy", the inference that if the physical cause of a disorder is not known, then there is no physical cause and the cause must be psychological. There are procedural, medical, logical, historical and theoretical reasons why this inference is unsound, but it is still widespread and has often led to the exaggeration or invention of psychological causes.

Another problem is that it tends to encourage a "unicausal" approach to disorders -i.e. to the view that physical disorders have only a physical cause or causes and that mental disorders have only a mental cause or causes. Additionally, disadvantage and stigma are associated with the term mental disorder.

DSM-IV, the classification of mental disorders produced by the American Psychiatric Association, openly admits that it is unable to give any satisfactory account of the distinction. Kendell's suggestion, that mental disorder is to be understood to mean psychiatric disorder and that psychiatric disorder is to be construed as disorder that psychiatrists treat, begs the question "What are the characteristics of psychiatric disorders that make it appropriate for psychiatrists to treat them?"

Any solution needs to be (1) rational (2) in accord with modern neuroscience and neuropsychology (3) in accord with a biopsychosocial approach (4) practical and medically usable (5) helpful towards providing appropriate treatment (6) not threatening to the status of any professional group (7) usable in non-medical situations insurance, benefit payments etc (8) non-stigmatising and (9) patient friendly

Drawing on ideas put forward by Fulford and Reznek, it is tentatively proposed (1) that the distinction is characterised as a distinction between disorders involving bodily function and disorders involving the higher mental functions, (2) alternatively that the distinction is drawn in a different place so that the dividing line comes between mental disorders and neurological disorders on the one hand and the other physical disorders on the other, (3) that the two resultant categories be termed Brain and Behaviour disorders and Somatic Disorders, (4) that the terms mental disorder, psychiatric disorder and neurological

disorder be retired and (5) that the biopsychosocial approach to all disorders be stressed.

These proposals may lead to a rational basis for the distinction. They do not encourage the psychogenic inference or a unicausal view of disorder. They are not reductionistic. (There is no necessary inference that the mind is nothing but the brain.) They are tentatively put forward for further exploration. Redefining the distinction in this way would mean that it was not totally discarded.

Session B

Itai Ivzan & Christopher C. French

Anomalistic Psychology Research Unit, Goldsmiths College, University of London

Exploring territory of no-boundary

Substantial empirical evidence has suggested a correlation between a mental state and the output of a RNG (Random Number Generator) machine (Radin & Nelson, 1989; Berger, 1988). Such results from previous research support the notion that some correlation exists between consciousness and the physical environment. This RNG technology allows an important line of research to be conducted: monitoring of environmental backgrounds in specific situations where human consciousness might be influencing its surroundings. Two groups, with 13 participants in each, met separately for a five-week meditation course. Two RNG machines collected data in the hour before the class began (control data) and during the one-hour meditation period (experimental data). The control data were compared with the experimental, in order to investigate the following factors: whether or not the basic effect was replicated (i.e., significantly more ordered data in the experimental than in the control periods), whether distance from the machine would influence the data, and whether or not awareness of the RNG would influence the data. Results suggest that all three factors play a role in the possible interaction between consciousness and the surrounding environment. Identification of such PK-conducive conditions might provide valuable information to guide the design of future PK studies.

Mindfulness Meditation to enable attenuation on imagined exposure in PTSD - a single case study

Mindfulness meditation (based on Buddhist meditative techniques) has previously been advocated for depression relapse prevention and chronic pain reduction in former research trials (Teasdale; Kabat-zinn etc.). Because the practice of mindfulness relates to body scans and focusing attention upon the body, it has been advised that it may cause problems in using such a method for sexual abuse and rape survivors, although no research appears to have been carried out in this area. In a single case study of a child-sexual-abuse adult survivor who frequently disassociated and experienced 'flashbacks' during clinical sessions, the methods of Mindfulness Meditation were introduced to her, in an attempt to keep an awareness of her surroundings, whilst doing imagined exposure in a CBT treatment for PDS (post duress stress disorder). From disassociative phases, flashbacks and cognitive avoidance of stimuli, the client became able to focus on the traumatic information being presented and to emotionally relate and process trauma memories, which previously she had been unable to do. Her ability to attenuate upon traumatic information was increased, habituation was easier from a clinical perspective, her anxiety levels decreased (BAI) and her depression levels eased (BDI). (N.B. The client's improved anxiety and depression scores may have been due to Mindfulness Meditation practices or to the processing of highly emotive information).

Conclusion: Mindfulness Meditation can be a useful adjunct to CBT work, when imagined exposure is being implemented for PTSD / PDS for processing of unintegrated traumatic information, where disassociation, cognitive avoidance or flashbacks occur within the context of treatment, creating a barrier to habituation from traumatic information.

Physics From Within: A Theorem

This theorem proves the fact of a relationship between the subjective phenomenon of consciousness and the causally closed physical world, allowing the hard problem to be solved in principle.

- i. Physical reality is changing continuously from A to B such that A causes B (or vice-versa) and is in the past of B
- ii. A duration of time, even an infinitesimal one, external to the mind of the observer, can only be experienced such that the beginning of the duration, is some re-creation by the mechanism of consciousness
- iii. If matter exists, it must occupy a volume of space-time
- iv. Matter occupies a duration of time
- v. Given ii and iv, matter occupies duration of time in a manner determined by the mechanism of human consciousness
- vi. Every representation of physical reality must include some conceptual device that performs the same function as consciousness

Session A

John Pickering

Warwick University

Embodiment, Merleau-Ponty and narrowing gaps between psychological traditions

The turn towards embodiment narrows the gap between phenomenological and empirical approaches to mental life. This gap, broadly speaking, is between Continental European and Anglo-American intellectual traditions. Merleau-Ponty is a major figure here, in both philosophy and psychology. This paper will explore some issues raised by his work, especially as it concerns selfhood and the body as an instrument for knowing.

The long overdue re-appearance of phenomenology in cognitive science opens the way to a more realistic connection with the actual experiences underlying both everyday living and the more systematic inquiries of philosophers and psychologists. These experiences make up the *Lebenswelt*, the 'lived world' that Husserl recognised had been banished from psychology by early twentieth century. Reading Husserl's unpublished manuscripts at the University of Louvain in 1939 was a major step in Merleau-Ponty's development as a philosopher.

The paper will briefly illustrate where Merleau-Ponty belongs in the traditions of continental philosophy. It will propose that his position, especially the direction in which it was moving at the time of his early death, anticipated much of what has recently appeared in cognitive science. In some cases, the work of Varela and colleagues being an obvious example, this is explicitly acknowledged. Elsewhere, for example in the work of Clark, Lackoff and Johnson, Gibson and Neisser, it is either implicit or unacknowledged.

The paper will explore what theoretical and practical consequences might follow from a more informed blending of Anglo-American and Continental traditions. It will also be suggested that if Western psychology takes more balanced account of both it would also narrow the gap between Western and Eastern approaches to mental life.

Joel Krueger

Department of Philosophy, Purdue University

Embodied Action and the Construction of Phenomenal Experience

In this paper, I argue for an active externalist account of phenomenal content. I do so by utilizing several concepts central to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception. Put simply, I argue that phenomenal content (the subjective character of experience) is not just caused but, more interestingly, constituted by the world and the things in it. Phenomenal content emerges through the embodied mind's dynamic sensorimotor patterns of interaction with its environment (patterns of sensorimotor action both actualized as well as implicitly recognized as being possible). In other words, phenomenal content is neither individuated nor exhausted by "in the head" mentality-whatever that is, exactly (e.g. intrinsic properties of neural activity, according to physicalists and many functionalists). Rather, the external environment drives, constitutes, and contours cognitive processes. And this external constitution includes the subjective character of experience. In a very real sense, subjective experience extends outside the mind and body, beyond the limits of the skull and skin and into the living world.

Maria Talero

Department of Philosophy, Rhodes College

The Expressive Body in Social Cognition: Language and Gesture as Intersubjective Co-Oriented Within Meaning-Terrains

Perhaps one of the central theses of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is the claim that consciousness is inherently embodied - that the phenomena traditionally designated as 'mental' in fact emerge from the resources of the body in its interactions with its environment. Closely related is Merleau-Ponty's ancillary claim that the body is inherently expressive or self-developing in nature. This claim, which has been less widely examined, offers valuable resources for understanding social cognition in an embodied context. This paper seeks to clarify what it means to call the body "expressive" by examining Merleau-Ponty's claim that language is fundamentally gestural in nature. The goal will be to show how Merleau-Ponty's position contributes to an understanding of the way that social cognition - our capacity to interpret the

behavior of others as indicative of their state of mind, thoughts, wishes, emotions and volitions - arises from the expressive activity of the body.

Erik Rietveld

Department of Philosophy / ILLC, University of Amsterdam, & Visiting UC Berkeley, Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute.

Affordance selection and monitoring: Lessons from utilization behavior and phenomenology

For Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) consciousness in skilful coping is a matter of pre-reflexive 'I can' and not explicit 'I think that'. The body unifies many domain specific capacities. There exists an internal relation between the perceived possibilities for action in the environment (affordances) and the organism's capacities. From Merleau-Ponty's descriptions it is clear that in a flow of habitual actions, the leading 'I can' may change from moment to moment. How these transitions occur, however, is less clear. I will clarify this by integrating the literature on the neurological syndrome 'utilization behavior' (Lhermitte, 1983; Eslinger, 2002) with that on performance monitoring (Holroyd & Coles, 2002; Ridderinkhof et al., 2004, Rushworth et al., 2004). It is expected that this will expand our insight in 1) the neural basis of affordances, and 2) the way we pre-reflectively generate adequate comportment in situations of everyday life.

Session B

Susie Vrobel

The Institute for Fractal Research, Kassel, Germany

The Nested Structure of the Now

What do temporal illusions tell us about the structure of an observer's Now? In a phenomenological approach, I shall show that the Now must be assumed to be extended, containing an internal differentiation which provides for simultaneity and succession. Simultaneity logically precedes succession and must therefore be taken into account when analyzing time series of cognitive processes both on the level of neural processing and on the level of reported subjective experience. A Theory of Fractal Time is presented, which differentiates between t_{length} (successive events), t_{depth} (simultaneous

events) and density (the fractal dimension of time, a derivative of length and depth). This theory develops a concept of time which is based on Husserl's notion of nested Nows and the Bergsonian concept of an indivisible present. Without the assumption of such a nested structure of the Now, the perception of succession would not be explicable. Individuals without nesting capacities would be incapable of perceiving a time series as a meaningful entity. For them, neither recollection nor anticipation would be conceivable. These observations are discussed within the framework of an endophysical perspective, i.e. interface reality.

David Childs

Honorary Clinical Psychologist, Avon and Wilts Partnership NHS Trust

How to describe now

How can the state of being in the present moment be investigated psychologically? If it is easily lost through distraction or discursive thought, must what is described always be something else? This question is timely in clinical psychology because of the growing interest in mindfulness methods which require a similar practice of both client and clinician. This paper suggests that the questions of method which follow centre not on the first person nature of the data but on an adequate notion of the experience of the present. Some principles for authenticating and describing this experience are presented. These are compared with some historical examples and tested with descriptions of clinical practice.

Derek J. Smith

Centre for Psychology, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

How ideas evolve into speech: a computer animation

In engineering terms, voluntary speech production consists of four or so successive coding and recoding stages. The first is when an initially amorphous idea emerges, the second is when words and a basic sentence structure have been selected to give shape to that idea, the third is when the appropriate sounds have been allocated to those words, and the fourth is when the appropriate muscle movements have been allocated to those sounds (see, eg. Garrett, 1990). All four stages require instantaneous access

to what are by definition long-term memory (LTM) resources, and yet the nature of that LTM changes from stage to stage. The first (i.e. innermost) two stages require access to what is usually described as a "semantic network", whilst the third and fourth stages require the retrieval and execution of what are usually described as "motor skills". The curiosity is that the contents of consciousness are determined at the early stages of processing, whilst the corresponding experience emerges later. This paper therefore demonstrates a computer animation of a psycholinguistic processing model, which highlights how the encoding at the "amorphous idea" stage of speech production has to interface with the feedback of that which has just been produced.

Robert Pepperell

School of Art and Performance, University of Plymouth

Consciousness, paradox and art

This paper will examine two opposing views of the way mind and world relate: 1. That human consciousness is a consequence of biological activity in the head, and 2. That consciousness extends beyond the head into the body and world. Recognising that there are strong theoretical arguments and evidence in favour of both approaches, I will suggest we may need to adopt a 'dialectic' stance in which each is accepted as valid, despite the inherent contradiction involved. This suggestion will be supported by recent work in non-classical logic, which proposes 'true contradictions' become unavoidable when contemplating the nature of thought and reality. I will draw on examples from art history to show how artists have often exploited both approaches by exposing the disparity between cognition and the extended world as well as the corporeal nature of visual perception, which relies on an implicit continuity between mind and world.

K. Helmut Reich

Rutherford University

Mind-brain: Which logical relation?

The emphasis here is on method, on an optimized comprehensive "logical" approach to a difficult, controversial issue, currently tackled by competing theories. The mind is understood as the enabler to think, feel, will, etc., in other words it is identified via human cognitive/emotional/volitional activity. The human biological body includes the brain and the nervous system, the indispensable bases for any human activity, including the former. This paper attempts to show that in specific cases, such as the present one, the use of a trivalent/ complementarist logic has advantages compared to the use of other logics, specifically to the more often used binary logic. The difference between complementary and 'complementarist' is that the latter, but not the former, implies entanglement of partial views (from differing perspectives) in addition to complementing the total picture by means of "coordinating" these partial views.

Marty Monteiro

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Mind & Matter: The Second Person

A new general social model of the human being's inner life, focusing on the relation between mind and body is launched. In constructing the human being's functional architecture, the perspective from the other human being is required. From the point of view of the first person "I" and the second person "You", the social model pertains to the physical, mental and social process levels. From a growth-dynamic or evolutionary point of view, the physical reality is axiomatic to deduct a mental and social process level. "Interaction" is the key concept, modelling all levels of human functioning in the reference frame of two thinking tools, namely 'finality' and 'causality'.

The design of the mind-matter model centres on the phenomenon of 'interaction', a general phenomenon that occurs on physical, mental and social

levels. Building up the human system by applying the same rule of deducting higher order processes from the assumed physical level, departs from the question of 'how' the processes emerge and how their relationships to each other are established. In the reference frame of finality (goal) and causality (cause-effect), the process architecture on all levels provides a general basic social model of the human being. From an integrated point of view of the relation between the first and second person, we attempt to unveil the issue of mind and matter.

Recording and acting upon environmental objects/subjects operates on physical, mental, and social levels. The mental level of cognition is social, directed to get feedback by perception, extracting information from objects and behaviour. The social level of recorded norms in particular, are pre-requisite for the formation and development of personality (long term memory) and the emergence of new values for building up a collective culture. Attitude (short term memory) mediates the attuning of communication and matching of values to create culture. The formation of personality and culture, being respectively a mental and material development, are the end-results of human functioning.

Modelling the architecture on physical, mental, and social levels and the formation of personality and culture, mediated by the attitude, attempts to give an answer to the question of 'how' these processes and systems emerge. It says nothing concerning the question of 'why' the human being performs his behaviour in that specific way. This issue refers to the household of matter/energy flow in the reference frame of relative energy 'shortage-surplus'. From an unbalanced state of a lack of stimuli/norms, 'energy transaction' originates within the first person, in order to bring about an energy balance in the framework of the first and second person. Through the exchange of psychophysical matter/energy of 'cost-benefit', subjective experience takes place through 'energy transformation' - an operation of 'fusion-fission' between mind and matter.

The hierarchical build up of personality and attitude-mediated culture is respectively a contra-evolutionary and evolutionary development. This development of personality towards mentalization on the one hand, and

materialization of common culture on the other, is not a linear event, but a discontinuous state transition. The human being is aware afterwards of the results of these transformational operations, but he is not able to know what happens within the 'gap', the discontinuous transitional evolution of the mind as well as matter. Therefore, personality development and natural/cultural evolution raises the ultimate problem concerning the question of whether or not a basic force exists as a "unifying-creating force".

Christopher Holvenstot

Biospecific logic and the extracontextual new world: defining separate contextual realms to understand conscious phenomena and anomalies in physics

The anomalous aspects of quantum behavior, dark matter, and dark chemistry, the emergence of conscious phenomena in a physical world, the irreducible nature of subjective experience and the impasse of cognitive closure all combine to signal an insufficient general means of assimilation in the sciences. This paper describes a new conceptual structure for integrating phenomena by introducing the following ideas: a biocontextual logic specific to animate existence; the correlative implication of an extracontextual realm with independent contextual logic; the structure and uses of this contextual division; and finally, the indications for a conscious condition vis-à-vis an application of this new structure.

W. N. Acheron

Social Subject and Beyond: The Incidental in the Narrative

A conciliation of neurophysiology and philosophy is itself subject to an (illusory) narrative- and the sense of interdisciplinary understanding of consciousness retreats further to the periphery of a system of an understanding- from which the thinker can not escape. If one were to ask 'what will my future take on?' where are we (as a social subject) venturing?

Social narrative looms in retrospect-- and here enters the non-empirical aspect of literary value that we put on consciousness. The sense of consciousness is in question precisely because our sense of unity, self-unity, that is, is in

question. The sense of continuity is not negated even if one were to see oneself as composed of episodes. This invites the sense of 'series'; and therefore, the sense of narrative is not diminished in any self-reflection. The nature of intention and meaning enters beyond a property of Emergence and therefore interpretation. A future narrative exists as well as a reflection of a structure which we could not have constructed by intention, rather by a phenomenon of reflective coincidence and incidentals.



Reconstructing Consciousness, Mind and Being

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