

Extended Consciousness

Sensorimotor Dynamics and Phenomenal Character

PhD Research Course, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), 23rd-26th May 2011



How are we to explain conscious experiences from a scientific perspective? This has become one of the most intransigent problems of contemporary philosophy. On a traditional understanding, it is the problem of how subjective feeling and phenomenal character can emerge from physiochemical states and processes in the brain. This idea is shared by the dominant research programme in contemporary cognitive neuroscience, which attempts to locate and identify *neural correlates* of consciousness. The neural correlates of a conscious experience are viewed as both necessary and sufficient for the occurrence of that experience.

According to a recent approach to the problem, however, the apparently mysterious nature of consciousness is due to our having looked for it in the wrong place all along – in the head. Instead, says this approach, we should see consciousness as residing in activities of the organism that involve its body and physical environment: consciousness is *embodied*, *extended* and *enacted*. Consciousness – what it's like, phenomenology – is to be identified with a certain kind of *activity*, namely a kind of explorative activity steered by implicit knowledge of sensorimotor contingencies linking action with its results in a continual cycle of adjustment between organism and environment.

This course will address the viability of the extended-enactive approach to consciousness through critical engagement with the most important contributions to it, as well as the major criticisms of it.

The course will be given by Professor Michael D. Silberstein and Associate Professor Anthony Chemero (author of *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*, MIT Press, 2009). There will also be guest lectures by Fred Keijzer, Antti Revonsuo and Nivedita Gangopadhyay.

The course can be taken as a 7,5 or 10 ECTS module. Contact Jonathan Knowles (jonathan.knowles@ntnu.no) or Vemund Warud (vemund.warud@ntnu.no) for further information and registration (deadline: Monday 16th May). Course participants are welcome to lunch each day and a course dinner free of charge.