

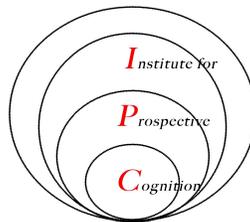
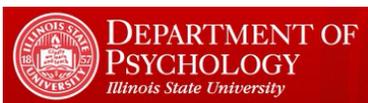
The Reality of Experience

Chicago IL
April 20-22, 2016

Conference Program



Hosted by:



SOCIETY FOR MIND-MATTER RESEARCH

Wednesday, April 20th:

- 2:00 - 2:10 pm > Opening Remarks / Welcome
Session A: Chair — J. Scott Jordan
- 2:10 - 3:10 pm > William Seager, University of Toronto, Scarborough
Title: *Could Consciousness Be an Illusion?*
- 3:15 - 4:15 pm > Georg Franck, Technical University of Vienna
Title: *The Experience of Reality and the Reality of Experience*
- 4:15 - 4:30 pm > Break
- 4:30 - 5:30 pm > David Leech Anderson, Illinois State University
Title: *The Reality of Experience: Implications for Intentionality, Agent Identity & Semantics*
- 6:00 - 8:00 pm > Dinner

Thursday, April 21st:

- Session B: Chair — Tom Buller
- 9:30 - 10:30am > Lana Kühle, Illinois State University
Title: *The Subjectivity of Experiential Consciousness: It's Real and It's Bodily*
- 10:35 - 11:35am > Şerife Tekin, Daemen College
Title: *The Missing Self in Scientific Psychiatry*
- 11:45am > Leave for Riverboat Tour
- 12:15- 1:30pm > Riverboat Tour
- 1:30 - 2:30pm > Lunch
- Session C: Chair — Harald Atmanspacher
- 2:30 - 3:30pm > Tom Buller, Illinois State University
Title: *Brain-Machine Interfaces and the Conditions of Agency*
- 3:35 - 4:35pm > Luis H. Favela, University of Central Florida
Title: *Consciousness is (probably) still only in the brain even though cognition is not*
- 4:35 - 4:50pm > Break
- 4:50 - 5:50pm > J. Scott Jordan, Illinois State University
Title: *Wild Holism: Moving Cognitive Science Beyond the Epistemic Gap*
- 7:00 - 10:00pm > Dinner/Jazz

Friday, April 22nd:

- Session D: Chair — Lana Kühle
- 10:30 - 11:30am > Jeff Yoshimi, University of California, Merced
Title: *Modeling Conscious Processes*
- 11:35 - 12:35pm > Harald Atmanspacher, Collegium Helveticum, ETH and University Zurich
Title: *Categorical, Non-Categorical, and Acategory Modes of Experience*
- 12:35- 12:45pm > Closing Remarks / Goodbye
- 12:45 - 2:00pm > Lunch / Departures

Abstracts (in order of presentation):

William Seager, University of Toronto, Scarborough

Title: *Could Consciousness Be an Illusion?*

On the face of it, the question in this paper's title is absurd and easily refuted. If consciousness is an illusion then it merely seems as if consciousness exists. But "seeming to exist" is a conscious state in itself and so the proposal is self refuting. I will argue that the situation is (slightly) more subtle than this. There is more than one way to *understand* how consciousness could be illusory, and at least two different ways it could *be* illusory. The first way is that consciousness could be a mere intentional object. The second is that consciousness could be devoid of any distinctive information or qualitative features. Despite the possibility of more subtle interpretations of the possible illusoriness of consciousness, in the end it will be shown that our original faith in the existence of consciousness is vindicated.

Georg Franck, Technical University of Vienna

Title: *The Experience of Reality and the Reality of Experience*

Experience, as a reality for its own, includes fundamentally different if not complementary modes of existence. Experience qua intentionality, to start with, is constitutive of objects that exhibit both primary, i.e. provable by measurement properties and secondary qualities, i.e. qualia. Qualia do not exist but by being experienced. Experience, by virtue of being phenomenal, does not exist but in the mode of presence. Presence is the mode in which subjectivity exists. Remarkably though, presence can be both subjective and objective. It is subjective in the form of mental presence, but socially objective in the form of the temporal present. The paper ventures into disentangling the complementary relations characterizing this complex.

David Leech Anderson, Illinois State University

Title: *The Reality of Experience: Implications for Intentionality, Agent Identity & Semantics*

In the philosophy of mind, it is assumed that one of the most important debates about the reality and nature of experience centers on whether or not all experiential properties reduce to physical properties. I do not think that this issue is nearly as important as others do. Instead, the really important debates are between (1) hard phenomenalism vs. soft phenomenalism (= qualia compatibilism) and (2) phenomenal intentionality vs. functional intentionality. I will defend phenomenal intentionality with an argument intended to show that functional intentionality leads to "agent indeterminism". And I will argue that if phenomenal intentionality is true then the language we speak is semantically dual – a position that has significant implications for epistemology as well as the nature of mind and language.

Lana Kühle, Illinois State University

Title: *The Subjectivity of Experiential Consciousness: It's Real and It's Bodily*

Experiential consciousness is characterized by a subjectivity. As Nagel (1974) famously asserted: “[N]o matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experiences *at all* means, basically, that there is something it is like to *be* that organism.” There is something it is like to be a subject of experience — a first-personal perspective, a what-it-is-like-for-me. In this paper I defend two proposals. First, I contend that to understand the subjectivity of consciousness we must turn to the subject: we are *embodied* subjects of experience. Thus, I argue, the subjectivity of experiential consciousness should be understood as a bodily subjectivity — an embodied first-personal perspective. Second, if we take this embodied approach, I propose that we can finally begin to explain the structure of experiential consciousness as subjective by looking at certain bodily processes — in particular interoception.

Şerife Tekin, Daemen College

Title: *The Missing Self in Scientific Psychiatry*

Mental disorders deteriorate a person's relationship to herself, her social environment, and her physical environment, and thereby primarily concern the self, which I characterize here as a dynamic, complex, relational, multi-aspectual, and multitudinous configuration of capacities, processes, states, and traits that support a degree of agential capacity. While various traditions in clinical psychiatry, ranging from psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and existential therapy, to cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy, implicitly or explicitly acknowledge that a disruption of the self is one of the common denominators of different kinds of mental disorders, the consideration of the self as the object of scientific inquiry has been limited in the mainstream scientific approaches in psychiatry. Specifically, this paper focuses on the tradition of psychiatric research driven by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the classification manual of mental disorders created by the American Psychiatric Association, that guides scientific research, and various clinical, forensic, and administrative services. I argue that the self, in all of its mental health relevant complexity (including gender, race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, etc.) has been missing from the inception of the manual's first edition (1952) to its fifth and current edition. The primary reason for the neglect of the self as a scientific target in the DSM is the putative view that the 'self' is not an appropriate object of scientific scrutiny. After assessing this putative view through a historical and philosophical analysis, I show that pessimism about studying the self scientifically is unjustified; the self can be treated as a scientific target in psychiatry, through the help of interdisciplinary work in cognitive sciences. Finally, I discuss the implications of this argument on the National Institute of Health's Research Domain Criteria (RDoC), which purportedly offers a better schema for psychiatric research than the DSM-5.

Tom Buller, Illinois State University

Title: *Brain-Machine Interfaces and the Conditions of Agency*

Ideally, neuroprosthetic devices would mirror the natural, biological model according to which an action follows seamlessly (and frequently subconsciously) from a specific intention or desire whose content is that action. First, we can ask whether the person's control of the device amounts to an action. One reason to answer negatively is that actions are of necessity behaviors that follow from precisely focused intentions and desires; in the present case the behavior does not directly follow from this intention per se but indirectly from a learned association. Second, an objection to the Extended Mind raised by Adams and Aizawa is that non-derived (intrinsic) content is a mark of the mental, but in EM cases such as Clark and Chalmers' "Otto" we only have derived (conventional) content. However, if we are prepared to say that the original and associated brain activity underlies the intention to control the device, and that associated brain activity has the role only as a matter of a learnt association (in other words, not in terms of intrinsic content), then intrinsic content may not be a clear mark of the mental.

Luis H. Favela, University of Central Florida

Title: *Consciousness is (probably) still only in the brain even though cognition is not*

There is ever more theoretical justification and empirical backing for non-brain-centric approaches to cognition. In many prototypical cases of "cognition," the body, environment, non-neural tools, and other cognitive systems are understood as playing causally significant roles in or are constitutive of the phenomenon under investigation. Although not without critics, such non-brain-centric approaches are doing quite well; so well that some argue that not only is cognition embodied, situated, extended, and distributed (ESED), but that consciousness is also ESED. I refer to this as the consciousness^{ESED} thesis. Here 'consciousness' refers to states with phenomenal character. Contrary to proponents of this thesis, I argue that the main source of their motivation—i.e., affordances—does not support the claim that because cognition is ESED that consciousness is too. I discuss phenomenological considerations and empirical evidence supporting the notion that affordances need not be consciously accessible in order to be perceived and utilized.

J. Scott Jordan, Illinois State University

Title: *Wild Holism: Moving Cognitive Science Beyond the Epistemic Gap*

Despite their differences, common to both computationalist and dynamical takes on cognitive science is the realist assertion that reality exists, as it does, independently of observers, and the job of cognitive science is to determine the regularities by which observers are epistemically connected to observer-independent reality. I propose that such an epistemic gap is an insufficient ontological starting point for a cognitive science. This is because the use of observer-independence as a criterion for objective reality leads one to implicitly generate an additional

gap, what I refer to as a contextual gap. By contextual gap I mean to say that the notion of observer-independent, intrinsic properties implies that a given property (e.g., mass) exists, as it does, in a manner that is completely independent of its context. If context-independent properties prove possible, then realism is the ontology of choice, and cognitive science remains the task of fleshing out the lawful connections between observer-dependent and observer-independent properties. If the notion of context-independent properties does not prove out however (Bauer, 2011; Dehmelt, 1989; Jammer, 2000; Jordan & Day, 2015; Schaffer, 2003; Prior, Pargetter, & Jackson, 1982), then reality becomes thoroughly relational (i.e., nothing is intrinsic). As a result, organisms can be conceptualized as contextually emergent embodiments of context (Wild Systems Theory; Jordan, 2013) that are thoroughly, relationally embedded within the contexts they embody. Given the lack of an epistemic or contextual gap, cognitive science becomes the study of the dynamics by which embodiments of context sustain themselves within context.

Jeff Yoshimi, University of California, Merced

Title: *Modeling Conscious Processes*

I describe a simple graph-theoretic way of simulating neuro-phenomenological structures. States of consciousness are represented by the vertices of a graph, and transitions between states are represented by edges. Nodes and edges have activations that change according to a few simple rules. The dynamics of such a graph can be linked with the meta-stable dynamics of the global neuronal workspace, as well as the dynamics of consciousness as described by Edmund Husserl and his student Aron Gurwitsch. Though I don't think this approach resolves the most difficult metaphysical mysteries associated with conscious experience, I do think it provides a tractable framework for making incremental advances.

Harald Atmanspacher, Collegium Helveticum, ETH and University Zurich

Title: *Categorical, Non-Categorical, and Acategorical Modes of Experience*

Mental representations are based upon categories in which the state of a mental system is stable. Acategorical and non-categorical states, on the other hand, are distinguished by unstable behavior. A compact terminology for the description of categorical, acategorical and non-categorical mental states and their stability properties will be introduced within the framework of the theory of dynamical systems. The relevant concepts will be illustrated by selected examples, such as bistable perception, experiences of the first person singular, and features of creative activity.