

ABSTRACTS

Monday 12
2:30 pm

Dorothee Legrand

CREA, Paris

"*Quelqu'un dans la peau*": Towards a bodily naturalization of the pre-reflexive self

This presentation mostly intends to clarify two points that will orient much of the debates during this conference, namely: pre-reflexive subjective experience and the role of sensori-motor integration. I will show that any reflexive act of consciousness is necessarily grounded on pre-reflexive subjective experience. The latter is an identification-free self-consciousness, where the self is specifically the subject, and not the object of consciousness. Pre-reflexive self-consciousness has interesting indexical characteristics and can be adequately explained by the processing of self-relative information. On the basis of such a description of pre-reflexive subjective experience, I will propose a naturalistic explanation. I will review three rival hypotheses, namely the "who system", the afferent and the efferent hypotheses. I will show that none of these views can provide an adequate naturalization of the pre-reflexive self I specifically tackle here. As an alternative, I will propose to bodily naturalize the pre-reflexive self thanks to a better understanding of perception and action as intrinsically sensori-motor.

Monday 12
3:10 pm

Natalie Depraz

Université Paris IV

Commentary

Monday 12
4:10 pm

Manos Tsakiris

Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, Univ. Col.London

On agency and body-ownership

As agents, we act upon the world with our body, and we experience ourselves, and the world through the same body. This fact implies that the sense of self is crucially dependent on motor and sensory signals. These signals are related to the phenomenological experience of agency and body-ownership. Agency is the sense of oneself as being the source of the action, the sense that actions are one's own. Body-ownership is the feeling that the body I inhabit is mine and always with me. The sense of ownership is present not only during voluntary actions, but also during passive movement and at rest. In contrast, only voluntary actions should produce a sense of agency. Thus, agency seems to be closely linked to the generation of efferent motor signals, and ownership to the perception of afferent sensory signals. This distinction suggests that agency and ownership should have different effects on awareness of the body. How do efferent and afferent signals interact to generate the sense of agency and the sense of ownership? The experiments presented focus on self-recognition and self-attribution. Overall, the results show a consistent contribution of voluntary action to a number of different measures related to the bodily self. In particular, efference underlies the sense of agency and at the same time functions as a unifying element that structures a coherent representation of the body. At the same time, the sense of body-ownership results as an interaction between bottom-up and top-down influences: sensory inputs related to the body are integrated against a set of body-scheme representations that guarantee the functional and phenomenological coherence of bodily experience. It is suggested that the unity of bodily self-consciousness comes from action, and not from sensation.

Monday 12
4:50 pm

Shaun Gallagher

University of Central Florida, Orlando

Commentary

Monday 12
5:25 pm

Dan Zahavi
Center for Subjectivity Research, Copenhagen
Consciousness and Self-Consciousness

In the first part of my talk I will briefly present some of the main features of a phenomenological account of the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness. I will in particular dwell on the idea that a minimal form of self-consciousness is a constant structural feature of conscious experience, i.e., on the idea that the immediate and first-personal givenness of experiential phenomena must be accounted for in terms of a pre-reflective self-consciousness. In the second part, I will consider and review four objections to this account; objections that might be termed 1) the transparency objection, 2) the anonymity objection, 3) the relationality objection and 4) the object objection.

Monday 12
6:05 pm

Kenneth Williford
St. Cloud State University
Between Zahavi and Brentano

I compare and contrast Dan Zahavi's account of the nature of prereflective self-consciousness (a kind of account with many notable proponents in the Phenomenological tradition and in the Heidelberg school) with a version of a Brentano-style account of the phenomenon. The crucial structural difference is that the latter account treats prereflective self-consciousness as a relational matter--a matter of an episode of consciousness literally bearing a relation to itself, while the former account construes it as an irrelational feature of all consciousness. I argue that many of Zahavi's criticisms of the Brentano-inspired account can be circumvented if we assume that the relation is an acquaintance relation and not some other sort of representation relation. And I argue that, construed this way, the Brentano-style theory may well be phenomenologically indistinguishable from Zahavi's account but may have some purely theoretical advantages.

Tuesday 13
9:00 am

Steven Laureys
Centre de Recherches du Cyclotron, Univ. de Liège
**L'éveil inconscient –
Self-unconsciousness and the vegetative state**

Consciousness is a multifaceted concept that has two major components : wakefulness or arousal and awareness of self and of environment. You need to be awake in order to be aware (REM-sleep being a notorious exception). The contrastive approach (comparing brain activation in circumstances that do or do not give rise to consciousness in either of its two main senses of awareness and wakefulness) is now widely applied in functional neuroimaging. Very few groups, however, have studied situations where wakefulness and awareness are dissociated. The most tragic example is the vegetative state. Here, patients 'awaken' from their coma but show no 'voluntary' interaction with their environment. Vegetative patients look "awake" but fail to show any behavioral sign of awareness.. Recent neuroimaging studies are revealing how wakefulness and awareness can come apart in the vegetative state, illuminating the relationships between awareness and: (i) *global* brain function; (ii) *regional* brain function; (iii) changes in *functional connectivity*; and (iv) primary versus associative *cortical activation* in response to external stimulation -highlighting possible perception of pain.

Tuesday 13
9:40 am

Jean Naudin & Michel Cermolacce
Faculté de Médecine, Psychiatrie, La Timone,
Marseille
Commentary

Tuesday 13
10:45 am

Josef Parnas
Center for Subjectivity Research, Copenhagen
The “minimal self” in a psychopathological perspective

The notion of minimal, basic, pre-reflective or core self is currently debated in the philosophy of mind, cognitive sciences and developmental psychology. However, it is not clear which experiential features such a self is believed to possess and what is its metaphysical status.

Studying the schizophrenic experience may help mapping the structure of the minimal self, because schizophrenia provides an investigative context comparable to a radical phenomenological epoché. In this presentation, the following aspects will be taken up and explored: the notion of perspective and first person perspective, the mineness of the phenomenal field, the questions of transparency, embodiment of point of view, and the issues of agency and ownership, considered as different, more distant from the feeling of 'mineness'. Defined as ipseity, we should perhaps talk of supra-liminal self. It will be finally argued that a minimal self can only articulate itself in a non-minimal context. This articulation presupposes both a substantial and a relational (processual) nature of the self.

Tuesday 13
11:25am

Claire Petitmengin
GET/INT, Evry. CREA, Paris (associate)
Commentary

Tuesday 13
1:30 pm

Yann Coello
Laboratoire URECA Univ. Charles-de-Gaulle Lille III
Self-consciousness in action

Recent data in cognitive neurosciences have suggested that perception for action is not an abstract, disembodied phenomenon but is rather shaped by body and motor constraints. Contrasting with the subjective experience of a continuous visual world, action space is necessarily constrained by the implicit representation of body capabilities. I will describe some experimental and neuropsychological works that suggest that the notion of embodied perception based on a pre-reflective sense of the body and action (Gallagher, 2005) can account for perceptual and decision process in visuo manual tasks. Furthermore, the characteristics of self-consciousness in action will be discussed in regard to computational model of integration of afferent and efferent information within the sensory-motor system.

Tuesday 13
2:10 pm

Alessandro Farne
INSERM U534, Espace et Action, Lyon
Commentary

Tuesday 13
2:45 pm

Simone Schuetz-Bosbach

Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, Univ. Col. London

The role of proprioceptive-awareness of one's own body in perceiving and interpreting other's bodies

In order to understand and explain other's actions we have to map an observed action onto a representation of the same action in ourselves. Thus, at some level interpretation of other's actions and expressions requires simulation including knowledge of one's body and its motor capabilities. In other words, the perception of others seems to be organized by an implicit reference to our own body. Does this body representation involve a direct, intrasubjective proprioceptive sense of one's motor capabilities or a more heterocentric visual perception of one's body?

We studied two subjects who lost the proprioceptive-tactile awareness of their body. In one study one of the subjects was tested on his ability to recognize static images of upright versus inverted human bodies. As in normal controls, his body recognition was impaired when bodies were presented upside-down. In a second study, we tested both subjects on their ability to extract information from acting bodies. Here they showed a specific deficit in understanding the expectations of another person when seeing him lifting boxes of differing weights. We conclude that first-person knowledge, i.e. proprioceptive-awareness of one's body, may contribute to the recognition of others' bodies by their actions but not by their perceptual features.

Tuesday 13
3:25 pm

Jean-Michel Roy

ENS-LSH, Lyon. CREA, Paris (associate)

Commentary

Tuesday 13
4:30 pm

Shaun Gallagher

University of Central Florida, Orlando

The primacy of impure pre-reflective self-awareness

The concept of 'pure consciousness' and certain related notions are used in a variety of ways by a variety of thinkers, for example, in the phenomenological tradition and several meditation traditions. Sartre's distinction between pure and impure reflection goes along with his concept of a purified consciousness that has no structure except for pre-reflective self-consciousness. But pre-reflective self-consciousness involves the retentional-potential structure of consciousness, as well as the experiential aspects of embodied ownership and agency. These things, which can be elucidated both phenomenologically and neuroscientifically, make pre-reflective self-consciousness somewhat less "pure" than Sartre proposes.

Armed with this impure phenomenological model of pre-reflective self-consciousness, can we make sense out of descriptions of certain meditative states of consciousness? Descriptions of "pure consciousness events" (PCE) suggest a state of consciousness that maintains only part of its pre-reflective self-conscious structure, namely, its retentional sense of its own flow. The practitioner rids her experience of intentional contents through a modification of primal impression, but nonetheless does not experience this as a loss because protention is also eliminated. The sense of embodiment too is at a minimum; e.g., sitting, without movement generates no noticeable proprioception. In contrast, descriptions of mindfulness awareness (MA) suggest a state of consciousness that goes against the idea that every consciousness has the structure of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Consciousness as found in MA, seems momentary rather than stream-like, is without retentional-potential structure, without self or self-awareness without proprioceptive registration, without sense of ownership or agency; it is just the manifestation of intentional content in discontinuous and momentary experiences. The contrast between MA and everyday consciousness can be worked out in neuropsychological terms that lead back to retentional-potential structures, and hence to impure pre-reflective self-awareness.

If it is possible to alter our phenomenological-neurodynamic system through a variety of practices that re-engineer the temporal and embodied aspects of our experience, this may help us understand the default, everyday structure of consciousness. Does this mean that in doing so we are getting back to a pure or more elemental form of consciousness, a building-block of experience from which we can get a better or truer understanding of consciousness? I argue that the primacy belongs to the impure structure of pre-reflective self-consciousness.

Tuesday 13
5:10 pm

Bernard Pachoud

CREA, Paris

Commentary: Reaching (impure) pre-reflective consciousness by carrying out the reflective act

Wednesday 14
9:00 am

Helena DePreester

Ghent University

In-depth body and the origins of the subjective perspective: representation or auto-constitution?

In this lecture, we pay attention to the way in which the in-depth body and its interoceptive dimension is presented as constitutive for the subjective perspective. We borrow material from the neurosciences (Craig, Damasio), and approach this material from an epistemological point of view, inspired by Husserl's account of inner-time consciousness. More in particular, we investigate whether a (re-)representation of the in-depth body can eventually lead to a subjective perspective. In the neurological account of Damasio, such is the case, although a number of difficulties arises. From a phenomenological account, it can be doubted whether a perspective can be based on representations, since the content of a representation is constituted (from within a perspective) and not constitutive (for a perspective). Starting from Husserl's account of the auto-constitution of consciousness, we plea for an account in which the subjective perspective has interoceptive 'thickness', but is not based on representations. However, we do not follow Husserl's account of auto-constitution as a matter of formal constitution, but add content to it.

Wednesday 14
9:40 am

Jean-Luc Petit

Université Strasbourg 2. Collège de France. CREA,
Paris (associate)

Commentary

Wednesday 14
10:45 am

Evan Thompson

University of Toronto

Look Again: Consciousness and Mental Imagerie

This paper explores the nature of imagery experience and argues for the importance of phenomenological analysis in cognitive science. I argue that imagery experience is not pictorial in character and explore the implications of this view for the mental imagery debate in cognitive science. I also criticize representationist accounts of the so-called "transparency" of experience.

Wednesday 14
11:25am

Pierre Livet

CEPERC, Université de Provence. CREA, Paris
(associate)

Commentary