



Embodiment and the inner life: Cognition and Consciousness in the Space of Possible Minds

Murray Shanahan

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To understand the mind and its place in Nature is one of the great intellectual challenges of our time, a challenge that is both scientific and philosophical. How does cognition influence an animal's behaviour? What are its neural underpinnings? How is the inner life of a human being constituted? What are the neural underpinnings of the conscious condition? Embodiment and the Inner Life approaches each of these questions from a scientific standpoint. But it contends that, before we can make progress on them, we have to give up the habit of thinking metaphysically, a habit that creates a fog of philosophical confusion. From this post-reflective point of view, the book argues for an intimate relationship between cognition, sensorimotor embodiment, and the integrative character of the conscious condition. Drawing on insights from psychology, neuroscience, and dynamical systems, it proposes an empirical theory of this three-way relationship whose principles, not being tied to the contingencies of biology or physics, are applicable to the whole space of possible minds in which humans and other animals are included. Embodiment and the Inner Life is one of very few books that provides a properly joined-up theory of consciousness, and will be essential reading for all psychologists, philosophers, and neuroscientists with an interest in the enduring puzzle of consciousness.

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