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Editor's Introduction

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Since the 1990s, debates in philosophy of mind and cognitive science have come under a heavy influence from research in embodied cognition, often informed by phenomenological philosophy, pragmatism, developmental psychology, animal cognition, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence. Embodied cognition itself is a complex field of loosely related approaches that ideally seek a more coherent integration of different elements. These approaches have sometimes been collectively referred to as the 4Es, although over the past ten years the number four has been added to, and other letters in the alphabet have been proposed. So, not just 'embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive', but also 'ecological, emotive (affective), empathic, scaffolded, etc.'. These embodied (and more than embodied) approaches have challenged the standard approaches that focus on computational and proposition-heavy representational accounts. They push towards radical reevaluations on a number of basic issues including social cognition, self, perception, action, and, perhaps the most basic issue in the philosophy of mind: the very nature of mind. They likewise put pressure on questions that involve understanding the role of the brain in cognition.

If minds are embodied (4Etc.) and relational, then what implications follow for the way we think of minds? Participants at the 33rd annual Spindel Conference, *Models of the Mind*, explored these questions by addressing issues that concern notions of intentionality, representation, externalism, predictive coding, and the causal or constitutive roles of affect and affordance, tools and technologies with respect to consciousness and cognition. The conference provided a forum where representatives of different, dissenting, and sometimes conflicting models in the phenomenology and philosophy of mind were brought together to debate these issues.

Given that an ideal integration of interrelated models of the embodied mind pushes toward a holistic conception of cognition, where motoric and

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environmental elements mix with affective, intersubjective, social, and cultural elements to form a rich mélange of explanatory factors, what would this mean for empirical science? This type of holism challenges any attempt to focus exclusively on any one element, or to exclude factors that are clearly, or even ambiguously, part of the pattern that constitutes cognition. Any attempt to focus simply on brain processes, for example, and to claim that such processes hold the ultimate explanation of the mind, is simply ruled out. Yet, to develop such a focus is precisely the task of neuroscientists. Moreover, to do the empirical science (not only in the case of neuroscience, but in all of the relevant sciences from psychology to anthropology) one requires controls, and the notion of controls specifically rules out any possibility of including all factors at once. The typical way to deal with this problem is to do many experiments, including and excluding different factors in each experiment, and then to carefully look across all of them before drawing any general conclusions.

Two problems should be immediately apparent. How, within any particular science, does one go about integrating results of different experiments with different controls (and perhaps different methods of gathering data)? And, how does one do this across all the relevant but specialized sciences with the aim of drawing the large holistic picture? Scientists within their own disciplines deal with the first problem every day, and have developed techniques to solve it. But solving it often requires that they frame their analysis within a specific set of assumptions that are not always examined. Philosophical (conceptual) analysis, it is thought, can enter at this point to clarify basic concepts and assumptions. It may be, however, that philosophy also has a role to play in addressing the second problem – a more synthetic role of trying to draw the large holistic picture. In some respects, this is precisely the point where the embodied mind approaches come to put critical pressure on empirical science. These embodied approaches seemingly insist on a holistic conception of the mind, while science, in order to do what it does, insists on controls that focus the research on a limited number of isolated elements that can be studied within one specialized discipline.

The type of philosophy presented at the 33rd Annual Spindel Conference, and partially presented in this special issue, is one that takes seriously and draws from the empirical sciences of mind, but also maintains a critical tension between these sciences and a possible integration of the variety of elements that constitute the mind. At the same time, if we call this a critical dialogue between philosophy and science, there was also a critical dialogue going on among the proponents of the various embodied approaches. The possible integration of enactive, ecological, extended, emotive, etc. conceptions of the mind remains a not yet accomplished ideal.