Working Group 1: Fundamentals

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Centre for Research in Cognitive Science (COGS)
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WG1 focuses on several philosophical, theoretical, and epistemological issues that need to be addressed to advance the understanding of the mechanisms that subtend consciousness, addressing questions such as the following:

- Can consensus be reached on a definition of consciousness?
- What is agency?
- Does conscious experience have a function?
- Which computational principles differentiate information processing with and without consciousness?

- Not a “Philosopher’s Ghetto”
WG1 Member activity:
Three examples
Example:
Włodek Duch

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland

Collaborations/activities:
- Andrea Soddu, COMA group Liege, Toruń visit 10-12.10.2011

Publications:
Institut Jean-Nicod (CNRS - EHESS - ENS)
Co-organised two summer schools:
- Consciousness and Action (with Jean-Michel Roy)
- Self and Others (with Elisabeth Pacherie)
Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (ASSC)
- Member of the executive board
- Scientific committee of the Berlin meeting in 2009
- Scientific committee of the Sussex meeting in 2012
Ongoing collaborations with Patrick Haggard
STSMs in philosophy
ASSC16: Brighton, UK, July 2-6 2012

www.sussex.ac.uk/sackler

www.theassc.org/conferences/assc_16

Keynote speakers:
Victor Lamme, Tania Singer, Tim Bayne, Josef Perner, Geraint Rees, Christof Koch

Local organizers:
Anil Seth, Zoltan Dienes, Hugo Critchley, Nick Medford, Jamie Ward, Ryan Scott, Hazelle Woodhurst

www.brightondome.org
Example:
Tom Froese

- University of Tokyo (formerly Sussex)
- One of the more junior members of the Action, his research focuses on the way technology (e.g., the Enactive Torch) can assist phenomenology to inform a first-person science of consciousness
- STSM with Prof. Thomas Fuchs in Heidelberg resulted in an extensive collaboration, with one paper currently under review
- COST helped him to demonstrate the Enactive Torch to a wider European audience, which led to additional collaborations
- As a result, Enactive Torches have been distributed to various research institutions across Europe, including to Axel Cleeremans
WG1 Group activity: 2008 Workshop, Ghent
As with any science, a science of consciousness requires an ability to specify its explananda (facts, events, etc. to be explained) and its explanantia (states, facts, events, properties, laws, etc.) that do the explaining.

Conscious states (experiences) may be expected to play both of those roles.

A science of consciousness, then, has a double need for a way to specify experiences, and to do so precisely, systematically, canonically and communicably.”
“At least part of what is essential to most, if not all, experiences is their content — the way the experience presents the world as being.

This group will discuss the fundamental issue of how the contents of consciousness are to be specified.

How can images, virtual reality systems, new elicitation methods, art works, novel uses of language, technologies, et al, be used in a systematic way so as to enable a scientific study of consciousness?”
WG1 Workshop
“Specifying the content of consciousness: Toward a scientific phenomenology”

- Invited talk: *Consciousness as environmental mediation*: Adrian Cussins
- *Specifying the content of consciousness: Toward a scientific phenomenology*: R. Chrisley
- *Pain and content*: E. Myin
- *Images are not words, and there is a Cartesian theater*: M. Stamenov
- *The enactive torch: A technological bridge between eidetic and empirical psychology*: T. Froese
- *Consciousness, Imagery and Music*: W. Duch
Invited speaker Adrian Cussins uses the enactive torch to transform his understanding of what is involved in perceiving Axel Cleeremans.
The way forward: A personal view

- Need to address non-conceptual aspects of experience
- Need to solve conceptual problems: e.g., the tension between the first-person perspective and the objectivity of science
- Key component: Action- and technology-mediated philosophy
- Examples:
  - Synthetic Phenomenology: specifying experiential content
  - Enactive Torch: conceptual change
The way forward: A personal view

- Nascent stage of consciousness science
- Goal is not to address questions such as:
  - What are qualia?
  - (How) can we solve the Hard Problem?
  - Perhaps not even: What is the neural correlate of experience X?
- Rather, the goal (for now) is to discover:
  - What are the right questions to ask?
Thank you!

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