The Embodied Mind

A New Paradigm

Aspect	Traditional Paradigm	Embodied Mind Perspective
Mind-Body Relationship	Dualistic separation between mind and body	Integrated view of the mind and body as inseparable, interactive entities
Cognitive Processes	Emphasis on abstract reasoning, mental representations	Focus on the role of perception, action, and sensorimotor processes
Externalism vs. Internalism	Externalism: Knowledge is external to the individual	Internalism: Knowledge is grounded in embodied experiences
Perception and Meaning	Perception as passive, detached from bodily experiences	Perception as embodied and meaning-making through sensorimotor interactions
Contextual Understanding	Context often disregarded or secondary	Context as essential for shaping cognition and understanding
Mind as a Computational System	Mind as a computer-like information processor	Mind as an embodied and dynamical system
Individual vs. Social	Focus on individual cognition, disregarding social interactions	Recognition of the importance of social and cultural aspects
Representation and Symbolism	Emphasis on symbolic representations and mental representations	Recognition of the role of sensorimotor schemas and enactive processes
Reductionism vs. Holism	Reductionist approach to understanding cognition and behaviour	Holistic approach that considers the interaction of multiple factors
Consciousness and Subjectivity	Objective study of consciousness, often excluding subjectivity	Inclusion of subjective experience and the first-person perspective

Implications for our Understanding of Human Nature

Aspect	Potential of the Embodied Mind Perspective
Selfhood	Sheds light on the role of the body, perception, and action in shaping our sense of self; explores the embodied and situated nature of self-identity and self-awareness
Consciousness	Provides a framework for investigating the relationship between the body, sensorimotor experiences, and conscious phenomena; explores how embodiment and interactions with the world shape our subjective experiences and the nature of consciousness
Perception and Cognition	Challenges traditional views by emphasizing the active role of the body and the environment in shaping perception, attention, memory, and higher-level cognitive processes; explores how embodied interactions influence cognitive phenomena
Agency and Free Will	Explores the embodied basis of agency, volition, and free will; investigates how action and the body's engagement with the world contribute to the experience of personal agency
Reality and Meaning	Examines how our embodied experiences and interactions shape our understanding of reality and the meaning we attribute to the world; highlights the relational and situated nature of reality construction
Interdisciplinary Perspectives	Encourages collaboration across disciplines such as neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, and cognitive science to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between the body, mind, and reality
Practical Applications	Informs fields such as education, therapy, human-computer interaction, and robotics by integrating knowledge of the embodied mind; offers insights for designing environments, technologies, and interventions that align with our embodied nature

Recommended Reading

The following books provide a good introduction to the paradigm, in accessible form. They represent a selected subset of books from the wider body of authors montioned in the table below.

"Intelligence in the Flesh", Guy Claxton

A good, general introduction to the topic. The author starts from a position that, when considering human intelligence, the role of the body has been neglected and misunderstood.

"Seven and a Half Lessons about the Brain", Lisa Feldman Barrett

This book starts from a different position: common myths and misperceptions about the nature and structure of the brain, and what that menas for our understanding of human cognition. An easy-to-read book that is nevertheless based on the latest findings of neuroscience and psychology.

"Being You", Anil Seth

Amazon's blurb claims that this book, "Book of the Year" in 2021, challenges our understanding of perception and reality and does for brain science what Richard Dawkins did for evolutionary biology. His TED talk on video is worth watching, as well, although the book is more up-to-date.

"Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding", Mark Johnson

Together with George Lakoff, the author played an influential part in shaping the new 'embodied mind' paradigm. This book opens with a brief account of his own intellectual journey, which introduces many of the discoveries in the field over the past forty years.

"Language vs Reality: Why Language is Good for Lawyers and Bad for Scientists", N. J. Enfield

If the embodied mind embraces a threefold relationship between our mind, our body and our environment, language is central to our interactions with our social and cultural environment. In an entertaining and lively manner, the author shows that language is far better at persuasion than it is at faithfully representing reality. The book is highly readable despite being steeped in the science underlying the bugs and features of language.

Finally, I have written several relevant articles on my web site, and am in the process of writing more. A good starting point might be: [The Dominance of Left-Brain Thinking: A Hindrance to Project Success and Sustainable Solutions? - In Search of Wisdom]

Selected Scholars with Accessible Books

Scholar	Dates	Fields of Expertise	Notable Contributions
Lisa Feldman Barrett	b. 1963	Psychology, Neuroscience	Theory of Constructed Emotion, Embodied Predictive Processing
Andy Clark	b. 1957	Philosophy, Cognitive Science	Extended Mind Hypothesis, Embodied and Situated Cognition
Guy Claxton	b. 1947	Psychology, Education	Embodied Learning, The Role of Emotions in Learning
Antonio Damasio	b. 1944	Neuroscience, Psychology	Somatic Marker Hypothesis, Embodied Emotion and Decision-Making
Shaun Gallagher	b. 1952	Philosophy, Cognitive Science	Embodied Cognition, Interoception, Enactivism
George Lakoff and Mark Johnson	b. 1941 and 1949	Linguistics, Cognitive Science	Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Embodied Cognition, Philosophy of the Mind
Anil Seth	b. 1968	Neuroscience, Cognitive Science	Predictive Processing, Consciousness, Embodied Self
Francisco Varela	1946-2001	Cognitive Science, Neuroscience	Theory of Autopoiesis, Embodied Cognition, Mindfulness Meditation

Dr Terry Cooke-Davies
July 2023

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