

Varieties of Enactivism: A Conceptual Geography

Enactivism is a non-mainstream approach to cognition that, in its best established guise, rejects internal representation and proposes instead that autonomous living organisms bring forth meaning through a process of bodily coupling with their environments. The approach originates with Varela, Thompson and Rosch's (1991) book *The Embodied Mind* and has roots in earlier work on phenomenology and the biological phenomenon of autopoiesis. From these origins, the canonical position has been developed and enriched in various ways by Varela, Di Paolo, Thompson and others. All give autopoiesis a central explanatory role.

In recent years, the “enactivism” label has been applied more widely to include accounts that ignore or downplay autopoiesis. Enactivism, on a more liberal construal, shares at a minimum the original theory's emphasis on environmentally-situated bodily coupling and argues that the theoretical role played by internal representation should be restricted or eliminated entirely. One account in this broader category is the *enactive* or *sensorimotor* approach to perception, which was given perhaps its canonical statement by O'Regan and Noë (2001) and encompasses important work by Hurley (1998). More recently, Hutto and Myin (2013) have offered the first book-length statement of an approach to cognition they call *radical enactivism*.

Varieties of enactivism: A conceptual geography will chart this conceptual terrain. The symposium aims to clarify the core principles that underlie the respective varieties of enactivism, and in particular the key boundary lines that separate them from one another and neighbouring accounts in embodied cognitive science. In the process, the symposium aims to discover whether “enactivism”, as the term is used, picks out no more than a motley, or whether there is, alternatively, a minimal framework that could unify enactivist accounts while usefully distinguishing them from approaches nearby.

The extended abstracts below set out, in condensed form, the contribution each of our speakers is making to this conceptual geography. We hope participants will have an enjoyable and stimulating time hearing them presented in greater detail at the symposium itself.

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David Silverman (University of St Andrews/University of Stirling, UK)

Symposium Organising Committee:

Mario Villalobos (University of Edinburgh, UK)
David Silverman (University of St Andrews/University of Stirling, UK)
Dave Ward (University of Edinburgh, UK)

Symposium Programme Committee:

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Dave Ward (University of Edinburgh, UK)