

Can Enactivist approach entail the Extended Conscious Mind?

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In this paper I argue that narrativity shapes the experiential structure of emotions in multiple ways. Drawing on both philosophical and psychological accounts of the relationship between affectivity, language, and story-telling, I start by claiming that linguistic and narrative expression contributes to the individuation and regulation of emotions, as well as playing a cardinal role in conferring on them a process structure. I then expand on these insights by taking into consideration the phenomenology of borderline personality disorder (BPD). Disruptions of narrative abilities have been argued to be central to the illness, and in this section I argue that these disruptions are at the origin of a number of alterations of affective experience undergone by borderline patients. In particular, I claim that, due to the narrative “fragmentation” (Fuchs, 2007) characteristic of the illness, the emotions experienced by borderline patients have primarily an episodic character and bodily feelings and manifestations play a predominant role in their experience and expression. In addition, I identify a series of dynamics through which the disruptions of narrativity negatively affect the patients’ emotional regulation abilities. This paper discusses the enactivist attempt to entail the hypothesis of extended conscious mind (ECM). ECM refers to the suggestion that the material basis of conscious experience can be extended to the environment. The enactivists view the conscious experience as a relational interaction between the subject and the external environment. Ward (2012) argues that the personal-level description of conscious experience by enactivism naturally entail an extended sub-personal characterization of the material basis realizing conscious experience (ECM). I point out that without direct reasoning at the sub-personal level, enactivist description at the personal level is still open to an internalist characterization at the sub-personal level. To solve this problem, I suggest combining the enactivism with the concept of predictive processing. In the second part of this paper, I explain the enactivist version of predictive processing (Gallagher & Allen, 2016) and with the help of it, delineate a sub-personal characterization of conscious experience corresponding to the enactivist understanding about conscious experience. In particular, according to this characterization internal states of the subject function as preparations of the whole body in response to the changes in the external environment; conscious experience is realized by the active engagement of the subject’s body in the environment like a physical force created by the constant interaction between two physical entities (the predictive body and the changing environment). In this case, the boundary between the internal states and the external environment is transcended by the actions of the subject and ECM can thus follow.
