

THE CAMBRIDGE HANDBOOK OF

COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Edited by Keith Frankish and William M. Ramsey

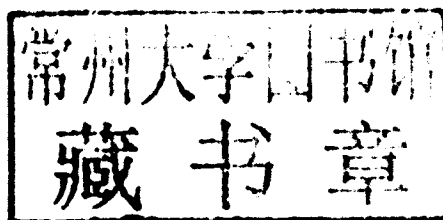


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The Cambridge Handbook of **Cognitive Science**

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The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science

Cognitive science is a cross-disciplinary enterprise devoted to understanding the nature of the mind. In recent years, investigators in philosophy, psychology, the neurosciences, artificial intelligence, and a host of other disciplines have come to appreciate how much they can learn from one another about the various dimensions of cognition. The result has been the emergence of one of the most exciting and fruitful areas of interdisciplinary research in the history of science. This volume of original essays surveys foundational, theoretical, and philosophical issues across the field, and introduces the foundations of cognitive science, the principal areas of research, and the major research programs. With a focus on broad philosophical themes rather than detailed technical issues, the volume will be valuable not only to cognitive scientists and philosophers of cognitive science, but also to those in other disciplines looking for an authoritative and up-to-date introduction to the field.

Keith Frankish is Visiting Senior Research Fellow at The Open University UK, and Adjunct Professor with the Brain and Mind Program in Neurosciences at the University of Crete. He is the author of *Mind and Supermind* (Cambridge, 2004) and *Consciousness* (2005), and he is co-editor of *In Two Minds: Dual Processes and Beyond* (with Jonathan St. B. T. Evans, 2009) and *New Waves in Philosophy of Action* (with Jesús H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, 2010).

William M. Ramsey is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. He is the author of *Representation Reconsidered* (Cambridge, 2007), and co-editor of *Philosophy and Connectionist Theory* (with David Rumelhart and Stephen Stich, 1991) and *Rethinking Intuition* (with Michael DePaul, 1998).

Contributors

Adele Abrahamson is a Project Scientist in the Center for Research in Language at the University of California, San Diego. She is the author of *Child Language: An Interdisciplinary Guide to Theory and Research* (1977) and co-author of *Connectionism and the Mind* (2nd edn., 2002).

H. Clark Barrett is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of numerous articles and book chapters on evolutionary psychology and cross-cultural studies of development and cognition.

William Bechtel is Professor in the Department of Philosophy, the Center for Chronobiology, and the Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science at the University of California, San Diego. He is the co-author of *Discovering Complexity* (2nd edn., 2010) and *Connectionism and the Mind* (2nd edn., 2002), and author of *Mental Mechanisms* (2008) and *Discovering Cell Mechanisms* (2006).

Nick Chater is Professor of Cognitive and Decision Sciences at UCL. He is the co-author of *Bayesian Rationality* (2007) and *Rationality in an Uncertain World* (1998), both with Mike Oaksford. He has written over 200 publications, primarily on the cognitive science of reasoning, decision making, and language, combining mathematical, computational, and experimental work.

Andy Clark is Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, at Edinburgh University in Scotland. He is the author of *Being There: Putting Brain, Body And World Together Again* (1997), *Mindware* (2001), *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies and the Future of Human Intelligence* (2003), and *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (2008).

Keith Frankish is Visiting Senior Research Fellow at The Open University UK and Adjunct Professor with the Brain and Mind Program in Neurosciences at the University of Crete. He is the author of *Mind and Supermind* (Cambridge, 2004) and *Consciousness* (2005), and he is co-editor of *In Two Minds: Dual Processes and Beyond* (with Jonathan St. B. T. Evans, 2009) and *New Waves in Philosophy of Action* (with Jesús H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, 2010).

Aaron B. Hoffman is a senior quantitative analyst at Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc., Los Angeles.

Ray Jackendoff is Seth Merrin Professor of Philosophy and Co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University. His most recent books are *Foundations of Language* (2002), *Simpler Syntax* (with Peter Culicover, 2005), *Language, Consciousness, Culture* (2007), *Meaning and the Lexicon* (2010), and *A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning* (2012).

Laura A. Libby is a graduate student in the doctoral program in psychology at UC Davis.

William G. Lycan is the William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina. He is the author of *Logical Form in Natural Language* (1984), *Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1987), *Judgment and Justification* (1988), *Modality and Meaning* (1994), and *Consciousness and Experience* (1996).

Gregory L. Murphy is Professor of Psychology at New York University. He is the author of *The Big Book of Concepts* (2002).

Mike Oaksford is Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Department of Psychological Science at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is the joint author of *Rationality in an Uncertain World* (1998), and *Bayesian Rationality* (2007), and joint editor of *Neurodynamics and Psychology* (1994), *Rational Models of Cognition* (1998), *Emotional Cognition* (2002), *The Probabilistic Mind* (2008), and *Cognition and Conditionals* (2010), as well as numerous articles and book chapters.

Casey O'Callaghan is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Rice University. He is the author of *Sounds: A Philosophical Theory* (2007) and co-editor, with Matthew Nudds, of *Sounds and Perception: New Philosophical Essays* (2009).

Elisabeth Pacherie is senior researcher in philosophy at Institut Jean Nicod, (École Normale Supérieure, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) in Paris. She is the author of *Naturaliser l'intentionnalité* (1993) as well as of numerous papers and book chapters.

Jesse Prinz is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at The City University of New York, Graduate Center. His books include *Furnishing the Mind* (2002), *Gut Reactions* (2004), *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (2007), and *Beyond Human Nature* (2012).

William M. Ramsey is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. He is the author of *Representation Reconsidered* (Cambridge, 2007), and co-editor of *Philosophy and Connectionist Theory*

(with David Rumelhart and Stephen Stich, 1991) and *Rethinking Intuition* (with Michael DePaul, 1998).

Charan Ranganath is Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of California at Davis. He has written or co-written over sixty papers on human memory processes and co-edited the book *Neuroimaging in Human Memory: Linking Cognitive Processes to Neural Systems* (2009).

Sara J. Shettleworth is Professor Emerita in the Departments of Psychology and of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Toronto. She is author of *Cognition, Evolution, and Behavior* (2nd edn., 2010) and of many articles and chapters on animal behavior and cognition.

Dominic Standage is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for Neuroscience Studies, Queen's University, Canada. His research addresses the neural mechanisms underlying cognitive phenomena including memory formation, working memory, decision making, attention, and executive control.

Neil Stewart is Professor of Psychology at Warwick University. His recent publications examine the psychology of credit card repayments, a review of evidence for contextual effects in risky decision making, and the design of fair police lineups for suspects with distinctive features.

Paul Thagard is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Cognitive Science Program at the University of Waterloo, Canada. His books include *The Brain and the Meaning of Life* (2010), *Hot Thought* (2006), and *Mind: Introduction to Cognitive Science* (2005).

Thomas Trappenberg is Professor of Computer Science and a member of the Neuroscience Institute at Dalhousie University, Canada. He has published numerous papers and is author of *Fundamentals of Computational Neuroscience*, now in its second edition (2010).

Barbara Von Eckardt is Dean of Liberal Arts and Professor of Philosophy in the Department of History, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences at the Rhode Island School of Design. She is author of *What is Cognitive Science?* (1993) as well as numerous articles and entries.

Ling Wong is a graduate student in the doctoral program in neuroscience at UC Davis.

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INTRODUCTION

Keith Frankish and William M. Ramsey

Overview

Cognitive science is a cross-disciplinary enterprise devoted to exploring and understanding the nature of the mind. In recent years, investigators in psychology, the neurosciences, artificial intelligence, philosophy, and a host of other disciplines have come to appreciate how much they can learn from one another about the various dimensions of cognition. The result has been the emergence of one of the most exciting and fruitful areas of interdisciplinary research in the history of science.

This volume of original essays is designed to describe the state of the art in cognitive science and to survey the major theoretical, philosophical, and foundational issues across the field. With a focus on theory rather than technical and applied issues, the volume is designed to appeal to both cognitive scientists and philosophers of cognitive science. Each chapter is a specially commissioned article from a leading writer in the area – either a philosopher of cognitive science or a scientist with strong theoretical interests. These writers cover the foundations of cognitive science, the principal areas of study, major research methodologies, and the philosophical implications of current research. The chapters are largely thematic rather than historical, and although the essays are primarily survey pieces, readers will find important critical insights, assessments, and analyses included in each essay. Readers are not expected to have extensive background in the primary subject areas.

This volume is distinctive in several ways. First, its coverage is both broad and authoritative. Its fifteen chapters provide a concise, up-to-date survey of a field that is developing and expanding rapidly, written by leading philosophers of cognitive science and front-line researchers with important and broad-ranging perspectives. Second, it is designed to be widely accessible. The contributors present scientific work in a form that is comprehensible to a humanities audience and focus on theoretical issues and applications rather than the details of experimental work. Third, the contributions are written at an intermediate level, suitable for both advanced students and scholars new to the area, and the book includes supporting materials, such as a glossary and chapter-specific ‘Further Reading’ sections, that make it an ideal teaching text. A companion handbook to artificial intelligence has also been

compiled, which has similar scope and aims and is designed to complement this one.

The philosophy and science of cognition

A number of the chapters in this volume are written by people who are usually characterized, not as cognitive scientists *per se*, but as *philosophers of cognitive science*. Moreover, the volume's co-editors both have their primary homes in philosophy departments. Thus, one might wonder why a volume about the *science of the mind* is so heavily infused with input from philosophers.

In truth, the distinction between cognitive science and the philosophy of cognitive science is not nearly as sharp as one might suppose. First, there really is no clear demarcation between empirical investigation on the one hand and philosophical reflection on that investigation on the other. Cognitive scientists must reflect on the broader implications of their findings, speculate about more abstract matters such as hidden assumptions and overarching themes, appeal to thought-experiments in arguing for their positions, and invoke traditional philosophical concepts such as knowledge, representation, and consciousness. In other words, there is a lot of philosophical reasoning involved in being a cutting-edge scientist. At the same time, philosophers of cognitive science must be well versed in the empirical theories and methods of investigation, so that their own contributions are relevant and beneficial. In fact, there is often little difference between doing, say, theoretical psychology and the philosophy of psychology.

Secondly, the philosophy of cognitive science involves two features that provide scholars in the discipline with a unique perspective on cognitive science itself. One is a broad-based understanding of the more general metaphysical, epistemological, and even ethical issues that arise in cognitive science. These include questions about the nature of mind-brain identity, reductionism, cognitive explanation and modeling, appropriate taxonomies for mental states, types of mental content, and so on. The other feature is an appreciation of the specific foundational issues associated with particular areas of cognitive research. For centuries, philosophers have been thinking and writing about a wide array of mental phenomena that different empirical researchers are now exploring. Aspects of the mind such as consciousness, mental representation, perceptual experience, and human action are traditional areas of philosophical analysis *and* the target of increased scientific scrutiny. The philosophy of mind has been dramatically transformed by scientific findings and theories, and, at the same time, philosophers have a unique vantage from which they can elucidate empirical work.

Thus, not only is there no sharp distinction to be made between science and philosophy (in this area at least), but researchers with a background in philosophy are particularly well placed to provide an overview of the science and to draw out the foundational issues.

The future of cognitive science

Because the essays in this volume present state of the art research and theorizing, they also provide a glimpse of where things are heading in the discipline of cognitive science. It is, of course, always difficult to predict the future of any field, but we can see certain trends that we expect to continue. For example, in their chapter on core themes, Abrahamsen and Bechtel discuss the expansion of cognitive science both downward and outward. The expansion is downward in the sense that more and more work in psychology is informed by discoveries and findings in the neurosciences. As many of the chapters here reveal, current work on consciousness, perception, learning, and a host of other aspects of cognition is increasingly being influenced by our growing knowledge of the brain. We fully expect this trend to continue and, indeed, to strengthen as neuroscientific knowledge develops. Expansion in cognitive science is outward in at least two senses. First, as Clark's chapter on embedded and extended cognition reveals, there is a growing movement to treat things beyond the cranium as vitally important to, and perhaps even constituent of, cognitive processes and states. This movement will no doubt continue as more investigators come to view cognitive agents as inextricably embedded in a web of complex interactions with a broader external environment. Second, over time cognitive science itself has increasingly interfaced with other disciplines and subdisciplines, expanding both the range of research it draws upon and the extent of its own influence. The chapters here strongly suggest that this theoretical expansion will continue, and, with it, the vital importance of cognitive science as the field that is at the heart of our understanding of ourselves.

Summary of the volume

The volume is composed of fifteen chapters divided into three main sections: *Foundations*, *Aspects of cognition*, and *Research programs*. We selected these sections because, taken together, they provide an excellent overview of the theoretical landscape of cognitive science. Each section and each chapter stands alone and can be read individually, though the sections and chapters are designed to complement each other, and the collection as a whole provides a systematic and comprehensive survey of the field.

Part I: Foundations

This section is devoted to the foundational issues of cognitive science. The first chapter, which is by Adele Abrahamsen and William Bechtel, provides a brief history of the cognitive revolution and the emergence of cognitive science. It also introduces some of the foundational issues, such as the philosophical

roots of cognitivism, the computer model of the mind, and the merits of cross-disciplinary research. The second chapter, by Barbara Von Eckardt, introduces the representational theory of the mind and explains the role that representationalism has played in the development of cognitive science. It explains some of the arguments for and against representationalism and looks at philosophical work on the problem of naturalizing intentionality. The third and final chapter of this section is by Paul Thagard. It deals with cognitive architectures – general models of processing and representation, which serve as paradigms in cognitive science. Thagard surveys the two most influential architectures – rule-based and connectionist – and considers the prospects for developing a general cognitive theory that combines aspects of both.

Part II: Aspects of cognition

This section is devoted to recent research on various aspects of cognition. The authors present a survey of recent findings and theories and discuss the more significant philosophical implications of this research. Readers can use this section of the volume to gain both a good grasp of specific areas of cognitive research and an understanding of the philosophical issues surrounding them.

The chapters, written by leading specialists in each field, cover a variety of topics. Casey O'Callaghan looks at perception, explaining traditional philosophical problems which form the backdrop to contemporary scientific research and introducing empirically motivated theoretical issues, such as the relationship between perception, cognition, and action. Elisabeth Pacherie discusses action, showing how a more comprehensive, integrative picture of action is gradually emerging which draws on both conceptual frameworks developed by philosophers and empirical investigations into motor cognition. Charan Ranganath, Laura A. Libby, and Ling Wong survey modern memory research and introduce key issues in the field, stressing the theoretical advances that are resulting from collaboration between psychologists and neuroscientists. Mike Oaksford, Nick Chater, and Neil Stewart introduce some recent developments in the large and complex field of human reasoning and decision making, explaining both the main normative theories and important experimental paradigms, findings, and interpretations. In the next chapter, Gregory L. Murphy and Aaron B. Hoffman look at work on concepts and category learning. They identify and survey two main strands of contemporary research, one concerned with formal models of category learning, and the other focusing on the content of concepts and the interaction between learning and prior knowledge. Progress in the field, Murphy and Hoffman suggest, requires further integration of these two strands. The study of language has always had a central role in cognitive science, and linguists have developed detailed models of the mental structures involved in language processing. In

his chapter, Ray Jackendoff surveys this work and seeks to integrate linguistic theory with wider issues in cognitive science. Next, Jesse Prinz reviews recent research on the emotions, focusing on their causes, constituents, and effects, and introducing a major dispute over the role of cognition in emotion. Finally in this section, William G. Lycan looks at the aspect of the mind often regarded as the most resistant to scientific understanding: consciousness. Lycan disentangles different facets of consciousness and distinguishes empirical issues, on which cognitive scientists are making progress, from purely philosophical issues, which, he suggests, are likely to remain contentious.

Part III: Research programs

This section introduces readers to some broader research programs and their particular methodological and theoretical commitments. In the first chapter Dominic Standage and Thomas Trappenberg provide an overview of developments in the growing field known as computational neuroscience, which aims to provide explanations of cognitive phenomena that are rooted in models of brain structure and functioning. In the next chapter, H. Clark Barrett explores the developing and controversial discipline of evolutionary psychology and discusses why evolution is relevant to understanding the mind. The penultimate chapter, by Andy Clark, focuses on the boundaries of cognition. Clark explores the claim that cognitive systems and processes can be understood only by including the surrounding environment in which the system is embedded, along with the provocative suggestion that cognitive systems themselves actually extend out into the world. The volume concludes with a chapter on animal cognition, in which Sara J. Shettleworth presents some of the more significant findings in the field of cognitive ethology and discusses the different ways in which the study of animal brains and behavior has helped shape our understanding of cognition.

This choice of chapter topics is, we feel, sound and as comprehensive as possible given the size of the volume. Of course, there are other topics we would have liked to have included, in particular some alternative and emerging research programs. However, given the limitations of space, we decided to focus on mainstream cognitive science and established programs (though non-mainstream work is touched on in many places). We do not suggest that no work of value is being done outside this mainstream, nor do we deny that cognitive science may take a very different turn in the future. But the topics covered here are undeniably central to the discipline, and it is not our job as editors of a handbook to impose a vision of how the field will develop. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, this volume is one of a pair, and some alternative approaches to cognition are discussed in detail in the companion