

Seminar IRH-ICUB

Consciousness and Cognition: An Interdisciplinary Approach

<https://irhunibuc.wordpress.com/2016/04/05/new-seminar-consciousness-in-philosophy-and-neuroscience/>

convenor Dr. Diana Stanciu

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Date: Monday, 26 June 2017, 15h

Place: Faculty of Philosophy, Splaiul Independentei 204, Mircea Florian Amphitheatre

Prof. Marcin Milkowski

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences

Marcin Milkowski is Associate Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland. His work focuses on the philosophy of cognitive science, in particular on mechanistic and computational explanation in cognitive science. His recent publications include *Explaining the Computational Mind* (MIT Press 2013), for which he won the annual prize of the Polish National Science Center in the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2014. He also runs a project on “Cognitive Science in Search of Unity” funded by the National Science Center.

How to see whether a research program is degenerated?

In many fields of empirical inquiry, scientists approach problems within a certain research program that defines its core problems and hard core of hypotheses. For example, numerous different approaches have been proposed in psychology, and subsequently, also in cognitive science. These approaches help build individual explanatory models and restrict the hypothesis space about particular experimental results, as well as help design experimental interventions. However, it is far from clear how to tell when a research program is degenerated. Few programs, if any, show their value in a couple of years in terms of the number of specific novel predictions, even if imprecise hypotheses are available.

The problem at hand is inherent in the methodology of research programs as proposed by Imre Lakatos. Even if Lakatos stresses that the value of the program is cashed out in the number of novel predictions of significant phenomena, he also admits that the value is not predictable. But for this reason, it is always possible to argue that the program has been executed with less luck and that critics lack imagination in how the program might progress in the future; the research programs are always evaluated in hindsight. However, as Daniel Kahneman has repeatedly stressed, this creates a bias and people are prone to create biased narratives of success, and attribute the success to a particular research program, while in reality, it was due to sheer luck.

In my talk, I will try to overcome this problem by investigating whether one can find patterns in research that would be predictable not only of popularity of a given research program but also of its fecundity.