

Workshop "Consciousness and the Brain in Context"

UC Berkeley, San Francisco
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Introduction

In the last decade there has been a surge of interest in the science of consciousness. We know more today about the function and anatomy of neural systems underlying human experience than ever. Despite this, as of now, no stable models or strategies have emerged for the study of consciousness. As Crick and Koch write in a recent review article: "No one has produced any plausible explanation as to how the experience of the redness of red could arise from the action of the brain" (2003: 119). The source of this impasse may be a too narrow focus of cognitive scientists on the neural basis of consciousness and a corresponding failure to consider perspectives on consciousness made available by philosophy and other humanities disciplines. Human and animal experience depends on the brain, without doubt. But experience arises only in context – in the context of the situation of the whole animal's active engagement with its environment (including the cultural environment). Perhaps the source of our inability to bridge the gap between neural systems and consciousness is our neglect of the possibility that neural systems function to allow for consciousness only given this broader embedding. Perhaps consciousness only arises *in context*.

The purpose of this workshop is to investigate this possibility. The workshop will bring together a team of philosophers and scientists to explore strategies for understanding consciousness *in context*. The purpose of the workshop is forward-looking: to lay the foundations for future collaborations.

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