



Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content (MIT Press)

By Daniel D. Hutto, Erik Myin



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Most of what humans do and experience is best understood in terms of dynamically unfolding interactions with the environment. Many philosophers and cognitive scientists now acknowledge the critical importance of situated, environment-involving embodied engagements as a means of understanding basic minds -- including basic forms of human mentality. Yet many of these same theorists hold fast to the view that basic minds are necessarily or essentially contentful -- that they represent conditions the world might be in. In this book, Daniel Hutto and Erik Myin promote the cause of a radically enactive, embodied approach to cognition that holds that some kinds of minds -- basic minds -- are neither best explained by processes involving the manipulation of contents nor inherently contentful. Hutto and Myin oppose the widely endorsed thesis that cognition always and everywhere involves content. They defend the counter-thesis that there can be intentionality and phenomenal experience without content, and demonstrate the advantages of their approach for thinking about scaffolded minds and consciousness

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Editorial Review

Review

This important book testifies to the 'enactive' viewpoint in cognitive science having now come of age. In arguing that minds lack informational content, Hutto and Myin develop an original version of the enactive view that reshapes current philosophical thinking about embodied and extended cognition. Both proponents and critics of the enactive viewpoint will need to come to terms with this new enactive manifesto.

(Evan Thompson, Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto)

Most books that try to push the conceptual envelope tend to sacrifice analytic rigor for clarity of vision. That is surely not the case in *Radicalizing Enactivism*. Hutto and Myin defend a position that pushes ideas that most people think are a few steps too far several steps farther. The fact that their genuinely radical conclusions are supported by dense analytical argumentation makes the book a serious challenge to the status quo in the philosophy of mind.

(Anthony Chemero, Professor of Philosophy and Psychology, University of Cincinnati; author of *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*)

Anyone who is familiar with the field will be rewarded by reading *Radicalizing Enactivism*. The book engages philosophers on both sides of the representationalist/anti-representationalist divide with well-structured, compelling argument; and the original style makes reading enjoyable.

(*Philosophical Psychology*)

Based on a thorough and rigorous criticism of classical and contemporary analytical theories of content, including those which claim to be compatible with enactivism, the authors brilliantly point out endemic problems impeding the representationalist tradition. Their presentation of some domains of application of non-representationalism, and their development of the consequences of radical enactivism for debates about phenomenal consciousness and extended cognition, equally show, in my opinion in a remarkable way, the plausibility and relevance of their approach. For these contributions alone, the book is worth reading, both by supporters of the classical approach and by advocates of other forms enactivism.

(*Intellectica*)

Provocative... compelling... their critical attack on traditional theories of content provides a justification for enactivist radicalism.

(*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*)

One of the most original contributions to the already vast literature in recent philosophy of mind.... No

collection in modern philosophy of mind is complete without this ground breaking book.

(Choice)

This book is a (witty and engagingly written) manifesto with a true revolutionary feel to it.

*(Jakub Matyja *Constructivist Foundations*)*

The main merit of the book is that it shows that the work done so far in the project of naturalizing content is insufficient; it provides a powerful critical assessment of the current state of play in cognitive science and recent analytic philosophy of mind. Furthermore, the book pushes the boundaries and scope of enactivism as currently defended and suggests that a radical turn is in the cards for its advocates....opens the door to a full new program of research within the cognitive sciences.

(The Philosophical Quarterly)

Radicalizing Enactivism is an original contribution to the debate, well-written and highly recommended to anyone interested in these issues....a rich and stimulating book.

(Philosophy)

If you are interested in the enactivist or embodiment camps and have been wondering what firm philosophical foundation might be laid to support this movement for the long haul, look no further.

(PsycCritiques)

This is a little book which offers so much. It is witty, well written and structured, and should be accessible to those unfamiliar with these debates as well as informative and provocative to those who are. Anyone with even the slightest interest in theoretical cognitive science cannot afford to ignore the issues raised herein.

(Journal of Cognitive Computing)

About the Author

Daniel D. Hutto is Professor of Philosophical Psychology at the University of Wollongong and the author of *Folk Psychological Narratives: The Sociocultural Basis for Understanding Reasons* (MIT Press) and coauthor of *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content* (MIT Press).

Erik Myin is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Antwerp and coauthor of *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content* (MIT Press).

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