

Derra, Aleksandra

Introduction

Avant 2/2, 73-75

2011

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach
dozwolonego użytku.



Introduction

Aleksandra Derra

translation: Ewa Bodal

Shaun Gallagher (not to be mistaken with the Irish rally driver) is an American philosopher, phenomenologist and cognitivist. He studied philosophy at St. Columban's College, Wisconsin (B.A.) and Villanova University (M.A.), and economy at State University of New York, Buffalo (M.A.). He defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Embodied and time-consciousness* at Bryn Mawr College. Currently he holds the position of Moss Professor of Excellence in Philosophy at the University of Memphis, Research Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science at the University of Hertfordshire, Honorary Professor of Philosophy at the University of Copenhagen, and Affiliate Research Faculty at the Institute for Simulation and Training at UCF. He is the editor of the journal *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

In November 2006, he was a guest of the Institute of Philosophy at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń during the conference *Embodied and Situated Cognition: From Phenomenology to Neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence* organized by Dr. Tomasz Komendziński, where he presented the opening lecture *Social Robots and Social Cognition*. He also chaired the discussion panel *Situated Body*, featuring Jonathan Cole, Jordan Zlatev and Helena de Preester¹⁸ among others.

According to his private website, his research interests focus around such issues as phenomenology, the philosophy of mind, philosophical psychology, embodiment, intersubjectivity, hermeneutics and the philosophy of time. He is the author of such books as *Brainstorming: Views and Interviews on the Mind* (2008), *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (2008, with D. Zahavi),

¹⁸ More detailed information available at <http://kognitywistyka.net/~esc/index.html>.

How the Body Shapes the Mind (2005), as well as of countless articles (many of which are available online at:

<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~gallagher/gallonline.html>)

Gallagher is known for popularizing phenomenology, especially the achievements and life work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty; in his works, he argues for the relevance of the solutions proposed by this science-fascinated philosopher, developing an anti-Cartesian understanding of the subject? and his/her relations with the world. He calls for a joining of the cognitive stores of philosophy, natural sciences (especially neurosciences) or hermeneutics, in order to fully investigate the phenomenon of the human cognition and human knowledge. He rejects both the juxtaposition of natural sciences and humanities, and a scientific, reductionist approach of the cognitive sciences to the issue of the mind (consciousness, subjectivity). Drawing on the idea of embodiment, (according to the adage “the world is organized around our bodies”), he calls for integrating scientific knowledge and first-person human experience, as well as for an enrichment of the methodological stores of science through abstract considerations of humanists.

He is working on the idea of the so-called “front-loading phenomenology,” that is phenomenology that from the outset structures and aids in formulating a methodology of conducting scientific research over cognitive systems (he discusses it in more detail in the interview presented in the current issue). In addition, he also focuses on an integration theory of gestures, demonstrating the embodied and situated character of human speech (its relation with extraverbal expression, the presence of another human, etc.); he argues for an important differentiation between “body schema” and “body image” in the research on the subject and calls for abandoning dualistic thinking in terms of “culture vs. nature”. His works constitute an interesting example of merging a detailed argumentation following the nuances of scientific procedures with the synthesizing gaze of a philosopher, aware of the limitations of his conceptual workshop. However, these limitations do not stem from the particularities of the domain (be it philosophy, cognitive science or neurosciences), but from the conviction of the existence of plurality of factors that would have to be included in the research: research perspectives, the complexity of interpretation, the multidimensionality of connections (interpersonal, social, historically conditioned, etc.), the bodily entanglement and positioning of the human in the world, the dimension of the first-person experience, to name but a few. According to Gallagher, good philosophy and good science make attempts not to ignore any of these (see *Hermeneutics and cognitive sciences* in the current issue).

Bibliography:

Gallagher, S. 1992. *Hermeneutics and Education*. SUNY Press.

Gallagher, S., red. 2008. *Views and Interviews on the Mind*. Imprint Academic Press.

Gallagher, S., Zahavi, D. 2008. *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*.

Gallagher, S. 2005. *How The Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Online resources:

Shaun Gallagher's website: <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~gallaghr/gallonline.html>

Website of conference: *Embodied and Situated Cognition: from Phenomenology to Neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence*, Toruń, 2006: <http://kognitywistyka.net/~esc/index.html>