Vision and Activity: Enacting Images

Saturday 18th September 2010
Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,
Arany János 1, H-1051 Budapest

In the traditional framework of *sense data* and *internal representation* visual perception was taken as separated from other cognitive and motor capabilities as well as from the perceiver's environment: visual perception was seen as a necessary source of information about the external world arranged along the patterns of the propositional structure of verbal expression. In accordance with the dominance of verbal expression, this view of visual perception underestimates the role and importance of images. Many difficulties and anomalies (the puzzle of homunculus, inattentional blindness, perceptual presence, the blind spot, the qualia debate, etc.) emerged within this traditional frame of reference and the resistance these anomalies demonstrate indicates a necessary shift in perspective.

Some recent considerations point towards a holistic view of visual perception either with an emphasis on sensorimotor capacities or on the affording/facilitating circumstances provided by the environment. Unlike phenomenalism and the snapshot conception, a holistic approach might resolve many old puzzles and may locate visual perception within a framework of motor capacities and the encompassing environment. Against the background of active engagement in the ambient world the visual scene plays a significantly different role, *viz.* it does not merely provide information for further cognitive processing but rather it yields a responsive background for any kind of cognitive and/or motor activity. Accordingly, images appear in a new light.

Revisiting the scope and limits of visual perception highlights some basic questions of visual processing and pictorial representation such as: What distinguishes pictures from other representational means? Why and how is it possible to consider a picture as a picture of something? Are there abstract pictures? If yes, what are they especially about? Where is the border-line between visual scene and picture and what yields grounds for it?

Speakers include:

Lambros Malafouris (Cambridge)
Erik Myin (Antwerp)
Petra Roesch (Cologne)
Klaus Sachs-Hombach (Chemnitz)
Oliver L. Schultz (Berlin)

Attendance is free but please register at kondor@webmail.phil-inst.hu.