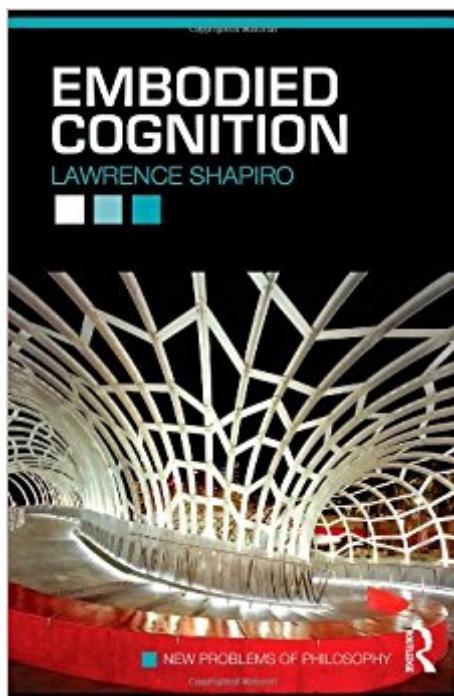


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# Embodied Cognition (New Problems Of Philosophy)



## **Synopsis**

Embodied cognition often challenges standard cognitive science. In this outstanding introduction, Lawrence Shapiro sets out the central themes and debates surrounding embodied cognition, explaining and assessing the work of many of the key figures in the field, including George Lakoff, Alva Noë, Andy Clark, and Arthur Glenberg. Beginning with an outline of the theoretical and methodological commitments of standard cognitive science, Shapiro then examines philosophical and empirical arguments surrounding the traditional perspective. He introduces topics such as dynamic systems theory, ecological psychology, robotics, and connectionism, before addressing core issues in philosophy of mind such as mental representation and extended cognition. Including helpful chapter summaries and annotated further reading at the end of each chapter, *Embodied Cognition* is essential reading for all students of philosophy of mind, psychology, and cognitive science.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Winner: 2013 American Philosophical Association Joseph P. Gittler Award for an outstanding contribution in the field of philosophy of the social sciences "Embodied Cognition is sweeping the planet and Larry Shapiro has just written the first comprehensive treatment of this exciting and new research program. This book is now and for years to come will be unquestionably the best way for students and researchers alike, to gain access to and learn to evaluate this exciting, new research

paradigm in cognitive science." - Fred Adams, University of Delaware, USA "A must read for those who support the embodied program, those who question it, and those who are just trying to figure out what the heck it is. It's definitely on the reading list for my course in embodied cognition." - Arthur Glenberg, Arizona State University, USA "Embodied Cognition provides a balanced and comprehensive introduction to the embodied cognition movement, but also much more. Shapiro is careful to sift empirical results from broader philosophical claims, and the concise, simple arguments for cognition's embodiment that he articulates will help advanced students and researchers assess the diverse literature on this hot topic in cognitive science." - Robert A. Wilson, University of Alberta, Canada "Embodied Cognition is the first of its kind - a beautifully lucid and even-handed introduction to the many questions and issues that define the field of embodied cognition. Psychologists, neuroscientists, computer scientists, and philosophers should jump on this book. It promises to set the terms of debate in this exciting new enterprise for years to come." - Elliott Sober, University of Wisconsin Madison, USA "Embodied Cognition is an outstanding introduction to this increasingly important topic in cognitive science. Written in a clear and lively style, with a critical approach, it is a strong contender for the most useful introductory text on any topic in all of cognitive science, and a genuine contribution to the scientific and philosophical literature on embodied cognition." - Kenneth Aizawa, Centenary College of Louisiana, USA "Embodied cognition is a controversial topic, and extravagant claims have been made both for and against it ... scientists would do well to pay attention when a philosopher produces an excellent monograph such as Embodied Cognition by Lawrence Shapiro. Shapiro is a philosopher with an impressive grasp of cognitive science, and he does a superbly thorough job of summarizing the relevant scholarship and evaluating the various claims that have been made." - David Manier, Lehman College, City University of New York, USA "Shapiro's discussion of the dynamic systems approach to cognition in general, and the remarkable but difficult work of Randall Beer in particular, are careful and cogent, and will be of great help to students hoping to understand the main thrust of, and the debates sparked by, this still underappreciated research area. Similarly, I find his extended engagement with the extended mind hypothesis and in particular the long and ongoing debate over whether we should believe that some of the constituents of cognitive processes lie outside the brain - to be clear and compelling. The book represents a genuine achievement." - Michael L. Anderson, Journal of Consciousness Studies "Shapiro is a philosopher with an impressive grasp of cognitive science, and he does a superbly thorough job of summarizing the relevant scholarship and evaluating the various claims that have been made. His writing is clear and persuasive, and he never seems tendentious. [It is] highly readable,

evenhanded, and clear to a fault." - PsycCRITIQUES

Lawrence Shapiro is Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. His research currently focuses on the issues and debates around embodied cognition. He is editor (with Brie Gertler) of *Arguing About the Mind* (2007), also available from Routledge.

This book has been something for which I have been waiting for quite some time. Shapiro gives an excellent overview of the history of cognitive science, beginning with the "standard cognitive science," often referred to informational processing theory of computationalism. This viewpoint sees the mind as a computer - the mind manipulates symbolic representations acquired from your perception and based on some algorithm, it produces behavior. Of course, this view not only fit the zeitgeist of the late 50s/early 60s and the computer revolution, but it was also pretty "sexy" to think that way. Even in its beginning, this view had some critics, including Gibson's famous rebuttal with the field of Ecological Psychology: perception is for action. Shapiro gives an excellent overview of the recent move away from computationalism towards the idea of embodied cognition. Simply put, embodied cognition implies that cognition does not occur only "in the head," but is rather a process emerging from the dynamic interplay between brain, body, and world. Of course, different theorists approach this idea in different ways, producing various "flavors" of embodied cognition which Shapiro summarizes and critiques. Anyone interested in embodied cognition and anyone dissatisfied with the [outdated] model of information processing theory needs to read this book. There are, of course, several downsides. First, I think Shapiro could have done a more thorough job of critiquing information processing theory and laying out the theoretical groundwork for embodied cognition. He went into some detail, but it was not too satisfactory in my opinion (though still very good). Second, he does not provide a global definition of what it means to have embodied cognition - as far as I know, no theorist has been able to provide it, hence the "flavors" of this theoretical umbrella. Providing such a global definition is no easy feat, of course, but I think any attempt would have been helpful to move towards a global view of what it means to be embodied. Sum: great book, great read

Shapiro is a philosopher writing with outstanding knowledge on the subject. Embodiment is an extreme hot topic in modern cognitive science and Shapiro presents a most valuable introduction of the development in the field beginning with a presentation of what he calls "standard cognitive

science". This "standard" version presented human cognition as computer metaphor suggesting there were a "general problem solver" (GPS) in our mind. The aim of standard cognitive science was seen then as reconstruction of the logic of GPS. Shapiro shows how this view produced unsolved problems which can better be approached by extension of the mind: The mind which is thought of to inhabit the brain is now seen as including a whole body. An old sentence by Sigmund Freud seems to become true that the Ego be mainly embodied. In the book no reference to psychoanalysis is made. Nevertheless sometimes one finds these seemingly outdated references of value. What gifted scholars formulated a century ago sometimes is validated a century later - but with enormous gain in detail. Shapiro shows that "embodiment" is not a spiritual movement, as many thought. Embodiment is in the best sense a scientific endeavour and who ever wants to learn about some very interesting details of this development should read the well written book. It's a "must read" for all cognitive researchers at least for one reason: as Shapiro feels obliged to analyze the constraints of the new paradigm which he promotes so fairly. You leave reading the book feeling a little bit more cognitive without being impoverished in emotional enthusiasm. Michael B.

BuchholzGÃ¶ttingenGERMANY

Great book, really covers the background of embodied cognition. The writing style is clear and provides many opportunities for further reading. Would work well for a seminar reading if you are just introducing the subject of embodied cognition.

In this short volume, Lawrence Shapiro offers an overview of the state of embodied cognition, and its relation to cognitive science research. Shapiro begins by presenting a general overview of traditional cognitive science, with its emphasis on symbolic representation and algorithms, and challenges to this framework, including connectionism, and J.J. Gibson's ecological psychology. Shapiro then explores "embodied cognition" by dividing this vast field of research into three themes. The first conceptualization, argues that an organism's body limits or constrains the concepts it can acquire. Here Shapiro includes the work on metaphors by Lakoff and arguments by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in "The Embodied Mind." The second theme, replacement, argues, contra traditional cogsci, that cognition does not (or need not) include representational states. Here Shapiro foregrounds the work of Esther Thelen on dynamical systems theory. Finally, the theme of constitution argues that the body (or world) plays a constitutive role in cognitive processing, as in the work of Andy Clark. Not all of the work falling under the rubric of "embodied cognition" highlights all of these themes, (nor are these views necessarily consistent), and Shapiro readily advances his

own criticisms and judgements throughout the volume. All told, it is a useful overview of a promising field, although rather vague and dry throughout.

My knowledge about embodied cognition is very limited so I can't evaluate content of this book in a way specialist does. However, it is written in a very clear way and there are a lot of useful pieces of information which elucidates differences (sometimes questionable) between standard cognitive science, connectionism and embodied approaches.

Purchased this book as a gift for a friend who is a proponent of embodied cognition. She used it as a reference text for a paper, so I can't say how interesting this would be as a casual read. I'm sure it's intended as a textbook.

Great intro book.

Great overview of topic!

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