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Grounding Cognition

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Abstrak

Fifty years of research in cognitive science have demonstrated that the study of cognition is essential for a scientific understanding of human behavior. A growing number of researchers in the field are proposing that mental processes such as remembering, thinking, and understanding language are based on the physical interactions that people have with their environment. Rather than viewing the body as a support system for a mind that needs to be fueled and transported, they view the mind as a support system that facilitates the functioning of the body. By shifting the basis for mental behavior toward the body, these researchers assume that mental processes are supported by the same processes that are used for physical interactions, that is, for perception and action. Cognitive structures develop from perception and action. To fully understand why this idea is so exciting, we need to look at the history of cognitive science. One of the major ideas propelling the cognitive revolution was the computer metaphor, in which cognitive processes are likened to software computations (Turing, 1950). Just like software can run on different hardware systems, so can cognitive processes run independently from the hardware in which they happened to be implemented, the human brain and body. Furthermore, just as computer programs, the human mind was thought to manipulate abstract symbols in a rule-based manner. These symbols were abstract because they were not derived from interactions with the environment by way of sensory organs and effectors.