Public Lecture: Body, Self and Consciousness

Speaker:
Thomas Metzinger

Date / Time:
December 4, 2013 - 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Venue:
The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
# 4th Main Rd, Domlur II Stage, Domlur, Bangalore, Karnataka 560008

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Facebook Link:
Link to Facebook

Abstract:
The following is an extract from the introduction to Prof. Thomas Metzinger’s book The Ego Tunnel, written for a wider public.

"In this book, I will try to convince you that there is no such thing as a self. Contrary to what most people believe, nobody has ever been or had a self. But it is not just that the modern philosophy of mind and cognitive neuroscience together are about to shatter the myth of the self. It has now become clear that we will never solve the philosophical puzzle of consciousness—that is, how it can arise in the brain, which is a purely physical object—if we don’t come to terms with this simple proposition: that to the best of our current knowledge there is no thing, no indivisible entity, that is us, neither in the brain nor in some metaphysical realm beyond this world. So when we speak of conscious experience as a subjective phenomenon, what is the entity having these experiences?

There are other important issues in the quest to probe our inner nature—new, exciting theories about emotions, empathy, dreaming, rationality, recent discoveries about free will and the conscious control of our actions, even about machine consciousness—and they are all valuable, as the building blocks of a deeper understanding of ourselves. I will touch on many of them in this book. What we currently lack, however, is the big picture—a more general framework we can work with. The new mind sciences have generated a flood of relevant data but no model that can, at least in principle, integrate all these data. There is one central question we have to confront head on: Why is there always someone having the experience? Who is the feeler of your feelings and the dreamer of your dreams? Who is the agent doing the doing, and what is the entity thinking your thoughts? Why is your conscious reality your conscious reality?"

A Note on the Speaker:
Thomas Metzinger is currently Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and an Adjunct Fellow at the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Study (FIAS). He is also Director of the Neuroethics Research Unit in Mainz and Director of the MIND Group at the FIAS. In 2008 he received a one-year Fellowship at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Berlin Institute for Advanced Study), is past president of the German Cognitive Science Society (2005-2007) and of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (2009-2011).