



PHILOSOPHY

department

MOHAN MATTHEN

University of Toronto

“The Perceptual Emergence of Self and Other”

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2025

2:00–4:00PM

A&H Building, Room 0426. Snacks will be provided.

In his famous *cogito* argument, Descartes asserts that for as long as one is consciously aware of any intentional state, one must be aware of oneself as the thinker of that state. Russell denied this; he claimed that one could think without being aware of a thinker. In this paper, I discuss a question related to Russell’s claim. Must every intentional state, specifically every *sensory* state involve the thinker in its *content*? If so, then by thinking it, one would be thinking about oneself as thinker. To this question, I answer “No.” *Plants* enjoy a range of functionally complex sensory states; however, plants have no use for the distinction between self and other. Their sensory states do not need, and presumably do not possess, any self-involving content. However, most animals do make this distinction. Animals distinguish between their own bodies and other things. I speculate that these abilities contain the roots of self-awareness and awareness of agency.

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