

“Gießener Abendgespräche Kognition und Gehirn“

Mittwochs, 18.00 bis 20.00 Uhr, Raum F009

27.01.2016

“Self and Other in the Human Sensorimotor System”

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People experience and think of themselves as individuals or as a “self” that forms a coherent entity and is clearly distinct from other persons and the world that surrounds them. Recent theories emphasize the sensorimotor experience of the body as the basis of self-awareness. Here intentional actions make a key contribution to the sense of self by allowing the interaction with the world in a flexible way as to produce specific desired effects and by mediating the accompanying subjective experience of causing and being in control of one’s actions and their effects. In everyday life, this so-called sense of agency appears as a straightforward experience during our own actions that usually does not require any explicit reflexion. Nevertheless, the majority of studies investigated the sense of agency by asking participants, for example, to explicitly judge whether they were the author of an action or not. Yet, only little is known on empirical indicators of a pre-reflective sense of agency, and more generally a pre-reflective sense of self independent of any verbal report. I will present several neurocognitive studies in which we validated different implicit sensorimotor based mechanisms that appear to underlie agency and thus allow an automatic identification of events as self-generated. In particular, the presentation will focus on the role and nature of internal motor predictions underlying functional and dysfunctional experience of agency. Finally, I will discuss the principle of attenuation as being a key characteristic of the representation of the self and its implications.