

“Explaining the Sense of Agency”

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Abstract

What is it like to be an agent? What is it like when agency is distorted? In this talk, I examine cognitive scientific explanations of consciousness in agency, the sense of agency. I begin with a framework for explaining consciousness and then argue that current approaches inflate the phenomenon to be explained, the sense of agency, and the underlying neural/computational mechanisms. This both distorts and overly complicates our task. In contrast, I shall suggest a different, more austere account that focuses on our abilities to directly access, through our intentions, what actions we are currently performing. My account emphasizes a different sort of explanation, namely a functional account of what it means to keep track of an action. This yields an explanation of delusion of control in schizophrenia (a case of abnormal agency) and normal agency. In that way, we can explain consciousness in agency.