Self, Memory, and the Unconscious Mind
Titles and Abstracts

Nikolai Axmacher:

Arnaud D’Argembeau: “Memory and the self: from the past to the future”

One’s sense of self and identity depends in part on mental representations of personal attributes and experiences that are stored in long-term memory. Self-related knowledge includes memories of specific life events (episodic self-knowledge), as well as abstract representations of one’s personal characteristics (such as one’s personality traits, abilities, social roles, preferences, and values) that have been abstracted from multiple past experiences (semantic self-knowledge). Furthermore, recent research has highlighted the importance of personal goals and future-oriented thought in identity and self-related cognition. In this talk, I will discuss the representational systems and neurocognitive processes that support these different forms self-representations. In particular, the possible functions of the medial prefrontal cortex—the brain region that has been most consistently associated with self-referential processing—will be considered.

Iskra Fileva: "I Have a Male Body, but I Am not a Man: What Is Gender, and How Do We Know Our Gender?"

For most of us, sex and gender coincide: if you are born in a male body, you also identify as male, and if you are born in a female body, you identify as female. For transgender people, however, sex and gender diverge. How could this be? What is gender such that it can exist independently of the sexual characteristics of one’s body, and how can we know what our gender is if not by looking at our bodies?

These are the questions I propose to answer here. I will start with skepticism about the transgender case: transgender skeptics tend to either deny that there is such a thing as “gender” or deny that one’s gender can differ from one’s sex at birth. I will argue that skepticism is based on an understandable but in this case misguided tendency to identify things by the way they look. I will suggest that when we understand what gender is, we will see that gender cannot be identified simply by looking at someone’s body. I will then take the question of whether we can be wrong about what our gender is and argue that we can.

Finally, I will review some of the evidence on the neural correlates of being transgender and discuss its practical relevance.

Lluis Fuentemilla:

Beate Krickel: “Theories of repression and the meaning of ‘unconscious mental processing’”

The core of (neuro-)psychoanalysis is the notion of repression—an unconscious process by which memories, emotions, or desires are made unconscious in order to protect the self from painful conflicts. It has been argued that the concept of repression is problematic if not inconsistent, and thus cannot be a real phenomenon. Recently, philosophers as well as psychologists have made different suggestions for how to solve these problems (Hart 1982; Talvitie and Ihanus 2003; Boag 2006a; Erdelyi 2006; Talvitie and Tiitinen 2006; Boag 2006b; Boag 2007; Garssen 2007; Billon 2011; Boag 2012). In this talk, I will present the different approaches and highlight their differences. I will argue that none of them is successful in solving the problems. I will show that a fruitful notion of repression depends on a clarified account of
what it means for a mental process to be unconscious. A further conclusion will be that repression might not be a unified phenomenon but consist of various processes at different mechanistic levels. I will discuss how these insights will impact the empirical investigation of repression.


**Bence Nanay:** “Implicit bias as mental imagery”

I argue that implicit bias is a form of mental imagery, by which I mean perceptual processing not triggered by corresponding sensory stimulation in the relevant sense modality. This view has implications for explaining how and why one of the most successful way of counteracting implicit bias relies on mental imagery.

**Albert Newen:**

**Mark Rowlands:** “Beyond Content: Form, Fingerprints and Rilkean Memory”

**Mark Solms:** “The Self as Feeling and Memory”

This presentation will distinguish between self-as-feeling and self-as-memory. The self-as-feeling is rooted in upper brainstem and limbic body-monitoring and instinctual need systems; the self-as-memory is constituted by corticothalamic systems that learn how to meet these needs in the outside world. The latter systems aspire to automatize learnt predictions through iterative consolidation and reconsolidation, ultimately into basal ganglia. The latter (automatized) predictions are of two types, corresponding to what Freud called the ‘descriptive’ versus ‘dynamic’ unconscious. The implications of these distinctions for psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic approaches to pathology of the self will be discussed.
Gerd Waldhauser: “The transformation of episodic memories: Trauma, repression and beyond“