

Mirror neurons and motor intentionality

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Most of our social life rests upon the ability to understand actions performed by others. Philosophers and psychologists agree that this ability first and foremost depends on our capacity to mentalize others' behavior, by attributing them with the mental states that would drive that behavior, make it comprehensible and eventually predictable. Over the last few years, however, this view has been challenged by the study of the cortical motor system and in particular by the finding of a specific class of sensory-motor neurons: *mirror neurons*. The functional properties of these neurons point out that action understanding is primarily based on a mechanism that directly matches the sensory representation of perceived actions with one's own motor representation of the same actions. This not only indicates that mindreading is neither the sole nor the primary form of intentional understanding, but also reveals how deeply motor and intentional components of action are intertwined, suggesting that both action and action understanding can be fully comprehended only starting from a motor approach to intentionality.

