



Philosophische Fakultät



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Methods of communication

Monday, 11 April 2022, 6:00 p.m., Zoom

When people are face to face, they communicate not only by describing and indicating things, but by depicting things with their hands, arms, head, face, eyes, voice, and body, both with and without physical props. For many cognitive scientists, the fundamental—or only—way to depict things is with iconic gestures, but depicting is more general. It is also used in quotations (e.g., “The car makes a sound that’s kind of ‘[*groaning sound*]’”), facial gestures (e.g., wrinkling the nose over *disgusting* in “I think liver is *disgusting*”), full-scale demonstrations (e.g., how to hold a tennis racket), and even children’s make-believe play. Most utterances in conversation are a composite of the three methods—describing, indicating, and depicting. I will give evidence that depictions serve four main functions, that people spatialize them in particular ways, and that most depictions focus on particular features of what is depicted.