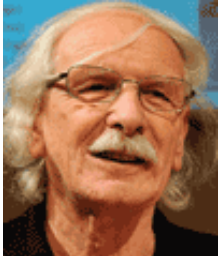


Mirror Neurons

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Giacomo Rizzolatti has a longstanding interest in how the cognitive functions of the brain are connected to movement. When he and his colleagues were studying neurons that control hand and mouth actions in monkeys, they noticed that the neurons would not only activate when the animal picked up a piece of food, but the neurons would also switch on when the monkey saw a person pick up a piece of food. Many researchers believe that these neurons could be important for imitation, language acquisition, and various forms of perception. The development of mirror neurons in humans is what allows us to learn through observation and communication and may play a role in how we understand the actions of others. Rizzolatti's research on mirror neurons has inspired the development of "mirror treatments" to help stroke victims recover motor function as well as countless other publications that span various disciplines in psychology, neuroscience, and health. Among his many awards are the Golgi Prize for Physiology, George Miller Award of the Cognitive Neuroscience Society, the Feltrinelli Prize for Medicine of Accademia dei Lincei, the Herlitzka Prize for Physiology, the Prince of Asturias Award for Technical and Scientific Research, and the Grawemeyer Award in Psychology.