

Moving beyond on- and offline cognition

Ludger van Dijk and Rob Withagen,¹

Abstract. In this talk, we reconsider the notion of time that is at the heart of the current distinction between online and offline cognition. Mainstream psychology starts out with an abstract notion of time, in which only the current moment is real. Persisting representational structures are therefore necessary for agents to make their way across time. We take Gibson and Heidegger to offer a different account of the relation between time and agency. Their theories suggest that, by taking agents in their world as constituted by coordinated motion, the need for representations disappears. Extending this approach to human involvement further, we show that it can account for our everyday concept of time while retaining a relational, situated character. Finally, we return to the distinction between on-and offline cognition and show that offline cognition need not be considered a different type of cognition, but only a different mode of coordinating: offline cognition in such a view is not a return to the internal manipulation of content, but rather, it is a contentless, unstable mode of coordinating to the world in which the relational constitution of agency falters.

¹ University of Groningen, The Netherlands, email: l.van.dijk@umcg.nl