

Estranged from oneself, estranged from the others: Investigating the effect of depersonalisation on self-other mirroring

ABSTRACT:

Background

Depersonalisation is a very common dissociative experience, typically characterised by a feeling of being detached from one's self, body and the world and 'watching' oneself from a distant viewpoint. Despite its high prevalence in the general population and the significant distress it triggers, little is known about its underlying mechanisms and phenomenological markers. It is crucial thus to address the experience of depersonalisation because, as one person with DP strikingly puts it, a disorder that makes you feel invisible, is invisible in society (Perkins 2021).

Aims

The overarching goal of our project was to explore the relationship between the experience of depersonalisation (DP henceforth) and sensorimotor processing of self and other.

Method

We used a combination of behavioral, psychophysiological and phenomenological qualitative measures to look at how the subjective feeling of being estranged of *oneself* affects and is affected by the experience of being estranged from *others* in depersonalisation.

Results

Our studies provided further evidence for impaired bodily self-processing in depersonalization. Specifically, perceiving self-related stimuli in depersonalisation seems to impair rather than enhance self-related information processing.

Conclusions

The scientific outputs from our project provide us with a rich, comprehensive and coherent first view of how the experience of depersonalisation affect self and other sensorimotor processing. Our project's results lay the ground for future progress in developing potential body-based therapeutic interventions aiming at alleviating the distressful experiences of depersonalisation.

Keywords

Bodily self, Depersonalisation, Touch, Facial mimicry

Published Work:

Ciaunica, A. (forthcoming, 2022). (Des)Integrating the self – Atypical multisensory integration of self- and world perception in depersonalisation and psychedelic experiences. In L. Chris & G. Philip (Eds.). *Philosophical Perspectives on the Psychedelic Renaissance*. Oxford University Press.

Os textos são da exclusiva responsabilidade dos autores
All texts are of the exclusive responsibility of the authors

Ciaunica, A., Charlton, J., & Farmer, H. (2021). When the window cracks: Transparency and the fractured self in depersonalisation. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 20(1), 1-19. doi: 10.1007/s11097-020-09677-z

Ciaunica, A., Roepstorff, A., Fotopoulou, A., & Petreca, B. (2021). Whatever next and close to my self – The transparent senses and the ‘Second Skin’: Implications for the case of depersonalisation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12: 613587. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.613587

Farmer, H., Cataldo, A., Adel, N., Wignall, E., Gallese, V., Deroy, O., Hamilton, A., & Ciaunica, A. (2020). The detached self: Investigating the effect of depersonalisation on self-bias in the visual remapping of touch. *Multisensory Research*, 34(4), 365-386. doi: 10.1163/22134808-bja10038

Researcher’s Contacts:

Dr. Anna CIAUNICA
Institute of Philosophy
Universidade do Porto
Via Panorâmica s/n
4150-564 Porto
Portugal
Email: ciaunica@yahoo.com

Dr. Harry FARMER
University of Greenwich, London, the United Kingdom
Email: h.farmer@gre.ac.uk

Prof. Ophelia DEROY
Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Germany
Email: ophelia.deroy@lrz.uni-muenchen.de

Prof. Vittorio GALLLESE
University of Parma, Italy
Email: vittorio.gallese@unipr.it