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CONFERENCE REPORT

Interdisciplinary College 2018—IK 2018: Me, My Self, and I

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An annual international spring school

The Interdisciplinary College (IK) is an international spring school for a broad audience consisting of undergraduates, PhD students as well as postdoctoral researchers. Each year the IK takes place in Günne close to the Möhnesee in Northern Germany. Topics cover not only technical domains, such as machine learning and robotics, but also psychology, neurobiology, philosophy, and many more.

The scientific program of the IK consists of lectures, poster sessions and evening talks. Lectures typically consist of three-to-four sessions of 90 min. Among the lectures, "basic courses" provide a general overview on basic knowledge in a specific discipline, such as an introduction to Dynamical Systems (H. Jaeger), machine learning lectures (B. Hammer), or an introduction to the philosophy of mind (W. Wiese). Another category is the "advanced courses" which go deeper and require more preliminary knowledge in a specific discipline. Other lectures specifically focused on the main topic of this year's IK, "Me, my Self, and I." These include topics such as "Animal Sociality: Finding the Me in Team" by J. Fewell and T. Pavlic, a lecture on self-consciousness and intersubjectivity by K. Vogeley, as well as more technical topics such as brain stimulation by C. Windischberger and C. Di Bernardi Luft. A highlight of the IK lectures is always the practical courses. These typically consist of theoretical introductions followed by sessions in which participants can experiment with the presented techniques by themselves. For instance, A. Schulz, C. Prahm and B. Paaßen offered a course during which teams of participants implemented classifiers to infer a user's intended commands to control a computer game from myoelectric signals. During some of the evenings, special talks, mostly about topics of general importance, complemented the spring school. For instance, T. Metzinger gave a talk on ethics in virtual reality and artificial intelligence.

In addition to the lectures, participants were encouraged to present and discuss their own research, for instance, during the poster sessions, which lasted until long after midnight. Moreover, participants had the opportunity to submit proposals for single 90-min lectures that focus on their own area of research. For instance, IK participant A. Haugg gave a talk on disorders of consciousness and methods to detect covert awareness in patients. This year's IK also had a third form of participation, the "IK hacks." Attendees could suggest special events that ranged from parlor games over discussions on ethics in machine learning to a lecture by T. Metzinger on minimal phenomenal experience.

In addition to the scientific program, there was also enough room for social interaction: participants interested in sports rented bikes or played water polo in the pool, people who favored discussions came together in the bar. Also, the lecturers took part in these social events which led to an extraordinary familiar atmosphere. This year, in addition to the great lectures and the welcoming atmosphere, I was particularly satisfied with the amount of discussions on ethics. Ethics in the context of technical applications was addressed during evening talks, lectures, IK hacks, and in the discussions between attendees which reflects the growing importance of ethical questions in our domains.

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