



2nd JEAN PIAGET CONFERENCES

Infant development from Piaget to today

Geneva, Uni Mail, June 20-21, 2016

Monday morning, June 20, 2016

9h00 **Andrew Meltzoff**, University of Washington
Imitation in Infancy: Developing A Post-Piagetian Theory

Abstract:

Imitation is a key mechanism of human learning. Human infants use imitation of adults to learn about physical objects, causal relations, and cultural practices. Infant imitation requires a close mapping between action perception and action production. This mapping can now be described at both the psychological level, and increasingly at the neural level. In this talk I will outline the “Like-Me” hypothesis. It proposes that one of the infant’s first and most basic psychological acts is the recognition of others who act, move, and behave like the self. This theoretical proposal, based on behavioral studies, is aligned with emerging findings in developmental cognitive neuroscience. My recent work investigates the neural correlates of infant imitation, using EEG and MEG to examine action coding and neural body maps. I will discuss infants’ representation of human action, the impact of early self-other mapping in infants’ understanding of people, and mechanisms of change in social-cognitive development. Finally, I will examine the how modern findings about infant imitation relate to Piaget’s original theory of sensorimotor intelligence, considering Piaget as an ancestor for current views about imitation and the origins of social cognition.