# Lecture 02: Social Cognition

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## 1. Objections to the Intentional Stance

Does the Intentional Stance actually describe how it would be possible, even in principle, to infer facts about minds and actions from evidence that can be described without knowing anything about the particular actions, beliefs, desires and other mental states of any individual?

Objection 1: The Intentional Stance provides no way to identify false beliefs, 'incorrect' desires or failures of rationality.

Objection 2: The Intentional Stance provides no adequate way to distinguish me from you.

## 2. The Topic Re-introduced

What makes others' minds and actions intelligible to us?

'I want to know what it is about propositional thought—our beliefs, desires, intentions and speech—that makes it intelligible to others.' (Davidson 1995, p. 14)

## 3. Perceiving Expressions of Emotion: A Challenge

McNeill (2012, p. 573): 'We sometimes see aspects of each others' mental lives, and thereby come to have non-inferential knowledge of them.'

## 4. Do We Really Need Evidence?

### 4.1. Peacocke

'Consider furniture that looks Swedish …or the properties of looking sad or looking delighted' 'One can explain the apparently perceptual phenomenon thus. There is some kind such that the thing or person appears to be of that kind, and the person judges that things of that kind are (say) Swedish people [sic].' 'But such a division … does not … fit the case of perception of the expression of an emotion. … There is no kind described without reference to the emotions of which one can say that the facial expression appears to be of that kind and it is merely an additional judgement on the part of the person that people looking that way are sad.' (Peacocke 2004, p. 66)

### 4.2. Smith

'the fact that these cases [looking Swedish/excited and looking happy] are different with respect to visual presence'. (Smith 2015, p. 5)

L: For any object O and functional property F, if the perceptual anticipations in one's perception of O 'latch onto' the functional role definitive of F, then one perceives O as being F. (Smith 2010, p. 741)

'If we define mental state M as that property one has if one will behave in way B given input I, and [...] one perceptually anticipates that if I occurs then one will perceive B, then one's perceptual states 'latch onto' property M' (Smith 2010, p. 741)

Do any perceptual states latch onto happiness?

'This is a matter open to empirical and phenomenological confirmation … [I]t seems likely to me' (Smith 2010, p. 742)

## 5. Categorical Perception & Emotion

'The higher amplitude of the N170/VPP for the second face of between pairs as compared to within and same pairs can be understood [… thus:]subjects are confronted with two faces (in between pairs) perceived as different expressions (happiness and fear) by the perceptual system.' (Campanella et al. 2002, p. 219)

'The N170/VPP is considered as the process indexing the structural analysis of facial information in order to obtain a configurational face representation (Jeffreys, 1996)' (Campanella et al. 2002, p. 219)

'visual search was more efficient when the targets displayed emotional rather than neutral expressions' (Williams et al. 2005, p. 46)

Argument:

1. The objects of categorical perception, 'expressions of emotion', are facial expressions.

so …

2. The things we perceive in virtue of categorical perception are not emotions.

Consider #2: Can the argument be blocked by claming that expressions are parts of emotions? See McNeill (2012).

Consider #1: What are the objects of categorical perception? Are they facial expressions?

## 6. Aviezer's Puzzle about Categorical Perception

Are the things categorised by perceptual processes facial configurations? This view faces a problem. There is evidence that the same facial configuration can express intense joy or intense anguish depending on the posture of the body it is attached to, and, relatedly, that humans cannot accurately determine emotions from spontaneously occurring (spontaneously occurring—i.e. as opposed to acted out) facial configurations (Motley & Camden 1988; Aviezer et al. 2008, 2012). These and other findings, while not decisive, cast doubt on the view that categories of emotion are associated with categories of facial configurations (Hassin et al. 2013).

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