

Social Cognition: What makes others' minds and actions intelligible to us?

University of Warwick, Spring Term 2015–6
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Outline

Social cognition is an umbrella term for the processes involved in discriminating, predicting and understanding others' thoughts, emotions and actions. Humans and perhaps other animals can discover much about others' minds and actions in the right circumstances. But what makes others' minds and actions intelligible to us? While philosophers have standardly focussed on the role of communication by language, recent advances in philosophy and the cognitive sciences indicate that perceptual or motor processes may play a foundational role in making others intelligible. What, if anything, could we in principle not know of another's mind without communication? In what sense, if any, can we perceive others' actions, emotions or other mental states? How, if at all, could motor processes enable us to discriminate, predict or understand others' purposive actions? Are others' mental states unobservable and do you need a theory to know anything about them? What is simulation and how is this relevant, if at all, to understanding others? Are goal ascription or mindreading modular processes? If social cognition involves multiple systems, what if anything ensures their harmonious operation? What evidence would show that nonhuman animals can represent others' mental states? Why might humans make use of multiple models of the mental? How do humans segment and read others' behaviour? What is the evidential basis for humans' knowledge of others' minds? Is it true that '[a]ll understanding of the speech of another involves radical interpretation' (Davidson)? Is knowledge of others' minds interdependent with knowledge of your own mind?

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1. *What Is to Be Explained? Mindreading and Mutuality*
 2. *Perceiving Mental States?*
 3. *The Motor Theory of Speech Perception*
 4. *Perspective Taking*
 5. *Goal Ascription*
 6. *Belief Ascription: Puzzles*
 7. *Belief Ascription: Solutions?*
 8. *Social Cognition in Nonhuman Animals*
 9. *Mindreading vs Mindsharing*
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Table 1: Extremely provisional schedule of lectures

Reading

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- Schneider, D., Slaughter, V. P., and Dux, P. E. (2014). What do we know about implicit false-belief tracking? *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, pages 1–12
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