Thoughts for Ian Apperly on 'Mindreading is an asynchronous joint activity'

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My favourite feature of the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis:

> 'Challenges the idea of "ground truth" whereby the "right" answer to a mindreading problem can be defined a priori. Pretty much all current approaches assume an objective ground truth, usually defined by researchers.'

Potential Challenges and Questions

1. First-person mindreading (Why did you do that? …)

   - Does not obviously involve other people.
   - Could be a consequence of online mindshaping, and so implicitly anticipates the joint part? But if so, would not always need to involve specific other people as opposed to a rough sense of what people around here would think ('anticipate social evaluative criteria').
   - On the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis, does the asynchronous joint activity involve specific other people?

2. Spectatorial mindreading looks to raise a similar question to first-person mindreading (e.g. where the target is a cartoon character or an imaginary or fictional or historical person).

   - One potentially relevant difference is that first-person mindreading is linked to authority and agency. Contrast asking why I did that with asking Lissy (intimate third-person) why I did it.
   - Authority—Of course you might sometimes trust Lissy's judgement more; but not in a trivial case.
   - Agency—in taking a third-person's judgement over the agent's you are sometimes casting aspersions on their agency (you think that's why you did it but really …).

3. If applying decision theory to predict choices, aren't we mindreading?

   - Appears that we are mindreading because we are ascribing preferences and subjective probabilities
   - Seems problematic for the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis because you are just using axioms to generate ascriptions and predictions. In this case, we really are decoding underlaying mental states from observable behaviour.
   - This might be useful to contrast cases where the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis applies with cases where it doesn't.

4. Is the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis really compatible with the intentional stance?

   - Seems like one core idea associated with the intentional stance is the idea that there are rules and you implement them (e.g. ascribe the beliefs that the agent ought rationally to have). This is probably not compatible with the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis.
   - Another core idea associated with the intentional stance is that all there is to having mental states is the applicability of the intentional stance. This should be compatible with the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis.
   - May be helpful here to distinguish *model* from *construal*. The former idea is about the model, the latter about the construal.
   - Isn't the mindreading-is-async-joint-activity hypothesis a hypothesis about the model and its uses rather than directly about any particular construal?

5. Does mindreading stand to psychology as folk physics to physics?

6. Is there room for the idea that people use different models of minds and actions to different ends?

   - To illustrate, maybe if thinking about some events when asked to answer a legal question (in a UK legal tradition), we might not ascribe intention whereas if thinking about the same events with an ethical question in mind we might ascribe intention (or conversely)? Might also be different if aim was to predict future actions rather than answer legal or ethical questions.

References