

Interacting Mindreaders

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Abstract

Could interacting mindreaders be in a position to know things which they would be unable to know if they were manifestly passive observers? This paper argues that they could. Mindreading is sometimes reciprocal: the mindreader's target reciprocates by taking the mindreader as a target for mindreading. The paper explains how such reciprocity can significantly narrow the range of possible interpretations of behaviour where mindreaders are, or appear to be, in a position to interact. It follows that revisions and extensions are needed to standard theories of mindreading on which all the evidence is in principle available to manifestly passive mindreaders. The view also has consequences for understanding how abilities to interact combined with comparatively simple forms of mindreading may explain the emergence, in evolution or development, of sophisticated forms of social cognition.