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How we know our own minds: The relationship between mindreading and metacognition

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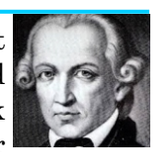
Four different accounts of the relationship between third-person mindreading and first-person metacognition are compared and evaluated. While three of them endorse the existence of introspection for propositional attitudes, the fourth (defended here) claims that our knowledge of our own attitudes results from turning our mindreading capacities upon ourselves. Section 1 of this target article introduces the four accounts. Section 2 develops the "mindreading is prior" model in more detail, showing how it predicts introspection for perceptual and quasi-perceptual (e.g., imagistic) mental events while claiming that metacognitive access to our own attitudes always results from swift unconscious self-interpretation. This section also considers the model's relationship to the expression of attitudes in speech. Section 3 argues that the commonsense belief in the existence of introspection should be given no weight. Section 4 argues briefly that data from childhood development are of no help in resolving this debate. Section 5 considers the evolutionary claims to which the different accounts are committed, and argues that the three introspective views make predictions that are not borne out by the data. Section 6 examines the extensive evidence that people often confabulate when self-attributing attitudes. Section 7 considers "two systems" accounts of human thinking and reasoning, arguing that although there are introspectable events within System 2, there are no introspectable attitudes. Section 8 examines alleged evidence of "unsymbolized thinking". Section 9 considers the claim that schizophrenia exhibits a dissociation between mindreading and metacognition. Finally, section 10 evaluates the claim that autism presents a dissociation in the opposite direction, of metacognition without mindreading.



Immanuel Kant "Perceptions without conceptions are blind". Seeing today's herd like behaviour of people, anyone will think that these words are from a social observer of today. But these words are from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who was born about 300 years back. Kant, short, about 5 feet tall with a misshapen body, was the son of religious parents. Influenced by Rousseau and David Hume, Kant can be called the Copernicus in the field of philosophy. His quote, "experience tells us what is, but not that it must be necessarily what it is and not otherwise" is and eye opener for any thinking human being. It will come as a revelation that this great thinker has not traveled beyond 70 kms from his place of living and has never tasted the pleasures of wine, women and even song.

Definition and Function of the Amygdala. ... There are two amygdalae per person normally, with one amygdalaon each side of the brain. They are thought to be a part of the limbic system within the brain, which is responsible for emotions, survival instincts, and memory.

The amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex in morality and psychopathy.

Blair RJ

Trends Cogn Sci. 2007 Sep;11(9):387-92. Epub 2007 Aug 17

Recent work has implicated the amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex in morality and, when dysfunctional, psychopathy. This model proposes that the amygdala, through stimulus-reinforcement learning, enables the association of actions that harm others with the aversive reinforcement of the victims' distress. Consequent information on reinforcement expectancy, fed forward to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, can guide the healthy individual away from moral transgressions. In psychopathy, dysfunction in these structures means that care-based moral reasoning is compromised and the risk that antisocial behavior is used instrumentally to achieve goals is increased.

When perception is more than reality: the effects of perceived versus actual resource depletion on self-regulatory behavior.

Clarkson JJ, Hirt ER, Jia L, Alexander MB

J Pers Soc Psychol. 2010 Jan;98(1):29-46. doi: 10.1037/a0017539

Considerable research demonstrates that the depletion of self-regulatory resources impairs performance on subsequent tasks that demand these resources. The current research sought to assess the impact of perceived resource depletion on subsequent task performance at both high and low levels of actual depletion. The authors manipulated perceived resource depletion by having participants 1st complete a depleting or nondepleting task before being presented with feedback that did or did not provide a situational attribution for their internal state. Participants then persisted at a problem-solving task (Experiments 1-2), completed an attention-regulation task (Experiment 3), or responded to a persuasive message (Experiment 4). The findings consistently demonstrated that individuals who perceived themselves as less (vs. more) depleted, whether high or low in actual depletion, were more successful at subsequent self-regulation. Thus, perceived regulatory depletion can impact subsequent task performance-and this impact can be independent of one's actual state of depletion