

In the talk, I defend the so-called Theory of Mind (ToM) account of social cognition from objections formulated by the proponents of Embodied Social Cognition (ESC). ESC theorists argue that social cognition does not employ ToM consisting of propositional attitude concepts as theoretical terms and that it is direct (i.e. non-inferential). According to this view, social agents do not mindread, they simply see the target's mental states in her behaviour. First, I analyse three objections against ToM accounts and in favour of ESC: (1) ESC conforms better than ToM to phenomenological evidence, (2) the interpretation of a target in terms of propositional attitudes is redundant because we deal successfully with social understanding by direct cognition of subjects' mental states in terms of so-called intentional attitudes, and (3) interpretation of overt behaviour in terms of propositional attitudes is underdetermined. Next, I argue against these objections. Countering objection (1), I claim that proponents of ESC provide no good reason to treat phenomenology as a decisive measure of plausibility of a theory of social cognition. Moreover, they ignore the fact that we successfully explain other cognitive skills in terms of complex inferential processes that are not accurately reflected in phenomenology. Regarding (2), I claim that direct perception must be supplemented by inferences concerning propositional attitudes of a target subject if one is to interpret cases where overt behaviour remains in indirect relation to intentions. In response to (3), I point to the contextual character of social understanding in terms of propositional attitudes. When this contextual nature of mindreading is taken into account, the threat of underdetermination is no longer serious. In conclusion, I argue that the ESC arguments against ToM are unsuccessful. The latter account remains in the game as a plausible candidate for a theory of social cognition.