



Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind

Simon Baron-Cohen

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In *Mindblindness*, Simon Baron-Cohen presents a model of the evolution and development of "mindreading." He argues that we mindread all the time, effortlessly, automatically, and mostly unconsciously. It is the natural way in which we interpret, predict, and participate in social behavior and communication. We ascribe mental states to people: states such as thoughts, desires, knowledge, and intentions.

Building on many years of research, Baron-Cohen concludes that children with autism, suffer from "mindblindness" as a result of a selective impairment in mindreading. For these children, the world is essentially devoid of mental things.

Baron-Cohen develops a theory that draws on data from comparative psychology, from developmental, and from neuropsychology. He argues that specific neurocognitive mechanisms have evolved that allow us to mindread, to make sense of actions, to interpret gazes as meaningful, and to decode "the language of the eyes."

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