

## **How isolated are we really? Toward a science of being-with others**

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Traditional cognitive science has approached the phenomenon of understanding others in terms of a Theory of Mind framework. This framework was originally proposed to overcome the problems raised by a pair of seemingly self-evident assumptions: 1) mind is a property of an isolated brain, 2) a person's mind, like their brain, is therefore completely hidden from the perceptual perspective of others. If so, then any scientific theory of social understanding must explain how one individual's internal mechanism can infer meaning from another individual's meaningless external physical movements. I will try to demonstrate that this is a misguided explanatory project for several reasons. When we interact with others we normally do not perceive them as mindless zombies, nor is our mind isolated from them. Therefore, what is needed is a scientific theory that can do justice to the perceptual presence of others and our mental interconnectedness.