The Priority of Second-Person Interactions
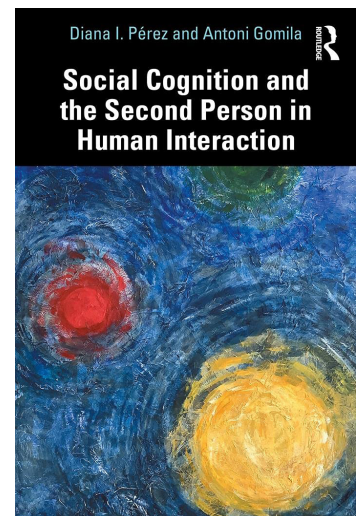
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> **Abstract** • Pérez and Gomila's book underscores the importance of second-person perspectives and interactions in our lives. The authors question the conventional Cartesian and cognitivist views of the "mind" and social cognition. Instead, they support anti-Cartesian and post-cognitivist approaches, highlighting that social cognition is fundamentally shaped through second-person interactions.

«1» In our daily lives, humans engage in a myriad of interpersonal interactions. During these interactions, individuals not only react to their interlocutors' behavior but also endeavor to discern their underlying intentions and thoughts through the medium of speech acts. Over the past few years, the notion of the second-person perspective has experienced rapid growth and has found increasingly broad applications within the realms of social cognition and human psychology research. Prominent scholars have extensively discussed the second-person perspective, and through collaborative endeavors, this concept has achieved nearly universal recognition. In this review, we provide a critical notice on Diana Pérez and Antoni Gomila's book, *Social Cognition and the Second Person in Human Interaction*.

«2» In the book, the authors introduce a novel viewpoint regarding psychological attribution, specifically emphasizing the second-person perspective. It is regarded as a stepping stone to proficiency in various other modes of psychological attribution. The concept posits that face-to-face interactions encompass a specific type of mutual mental-state attribution, which plays a mediating role in the dynamic progression of the interaction. Ranging from eye contact and joint attention to the manifestation of energetic forms and communicative intentions, from interactive detection to coordinated joint action and synchronicity, these constitute innate predilections for face-to-face interaction. Pérez and Gomila challenge the conventional notion of psychological attribution as a mere "theory of mind," asserting that the second-person perspective is the foundational approach for comprehending psychology from conceptual, ontological, and systematic perspectives. Interactions in the second person offer an opportunity to grasp the concept of psychological states, consequently enhancing cognitive complexity. This book provides a comprehensive review of the increasing interest in diverse second-person phenomena. Additionally, the book delves into the significance and applicability of the second-person perspective across diverse domains, including art and morality.

«3» The primary focus of the first chapter is to introduce the characteristics, qualifications, and origins of the second person. Second-person interavction denotes face-to-face engagement between two individuals, emphasizing psychological connection. The actions of one party can elicit responses in the other, with both parties perceiving each other's emotions, intentions, and attitudes, imbuing this perception with significance (Denise & Rüdiger 2015). Subsequently, the text delves into the qualities of the second person. While emotion plays a central role, it does not mandate that both interacting parties maintain identical mental states. This second-person approach conveys a kind of duality that is determined by both parties within a dyad. This suggests that, in a way related to constructivism, social cognition – whatever it is – might result from the construction of social interactions. Furthermore, second-person interactions need not exclusively rely on language, occasionally employing physical actions to discern each other's intentions. Importantly, the aforementioned characteristics neither suffice nor are necessary for identifying second-person interactions. Additionally, the second person possesses distinct origins, with its predecessors encompassing the dialectical, phenomenological, and existentialist-theological approaches.

«4» Chapter 2 delves into diverse perspectives on the second person and offers recommendations for concentrating on second-

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person interactions. By employing illustrative examples, we discern a common attribute of the second-person perspective: second-person interactions are mediated by a specific form of psychological attribution. These interactions are fundamentally grounded in an irreducible and authentic means of mutual comprehension. Second-person attribution primarily occurs within face-to-face encounters, constituting a self-directed process. Notably, second-person attribution is not restricted by first- or third-person psychological attributions.

Presently, a consensus remains elusive regarding the precise definition of second-person attribution and the interrelation of various forms of psychological attribution. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made in elucidating second-person interactions, largely owing to the invaluable insights of second-person theorists who have arrived at divergent conclusions and made significant contributions to the field.

« 5 » The exploration into second-person attribution is the core content of the third chapter. The objective of this chapter is to explain which concepts and content can be explained from the perspective of the second person and to make the people believe that second-person attributions are original, as they constitute the way we enter the spiritual world through the simplest attitudes and content (Gomila & Pérez 2018). The scope of psychological attribution from the second-person perspective is limited, and only simple psychological attributions can be made without involving other cognitive abilities, such as mastery of a language. Our contention further asserts that language proficiency assumes a pivotal role in the evolution of more intricate psychological attribution, entailing more complex content. Additionally, we elucidate the inherent limitations of the second-person perspective.

« 6 » In the subsequent chapter, the authors delineate a series of interaction phenomena involving various aspects of social cognition to exemplify what they term "second person interaction." Within these phenomena, a common pattern emerges: all these types of activities are facilitated through a reciprocal exchange of signals. They are triggered as suitable responses to

recognition signals, leading to communicative interactions. This comprehension stems from the recognition of expressive cues emitted by interaction partners, constituting a fundamental mode of communication that fosters coordination and engenders a sense of engagement. These cues, primarily emanating from the face, particularly the eyes, facilitate immediate recognition of another person through eye contact (Brandi et al. 2020). Additionally, gestures and body posture convey expressiveness. Mutual understanding encompasses motor behavior characterized by patterns of mutual adjustment, not necessarily contingent on a shared objective but rooted in mutual and adaptable expectations. According to the authors, language development unfolds within the context of intentional interaction, providing the foundation for the necessary cognitive development.

The evolution of morality is intricately intertwined with the evolution of cooperation

« 7 » The main purpose of Chapter 5 is to delve into the realm of the affective dimension. The initial part of this chapter places a particular emphasis on the pivotal role played by the dynamics of emotional responses to the expressions of emotions by others, all from a second-person perspective (Leonhard et al. 2013a). Concurrently, the authors delve into various emotional phenomena that exert influence within these interactions. In the majority of intersubjective contact, individuals openly express their emotions, thus eliciting emotional responses in others and facilitating the comprehension of these emotions through their expression (Niedenthal 2007). Human responses serve to regulate emotions by shaping how individuals treat one another in specific ways. Emotional regulation is not just something a person does, it can also manifest as a product of interpersonal interaction. The ability to discern the emotions of others through their expressive behavior amounts to practical knowledge, implying an implicit attribution to their mental state that leads them to act on their own expertise. Sometimes, for a specific reason, they need to hide their emotions in a specific setting. An essential facet of one's emotional experience lies in the understanding that the more one interacts with a particular situation beforehand, the better one can anticipate the emotional responses

of individuals in that case. In this section, the authors specifically examine six foundational emotions: fear, joy, sadness, disgust, surprise, and anger. These emotions are considered among the most primitive and boast a widely comprehended biological foundation (Scherer 2005). Early second-person interactions are the context in which emotional concepts appear and are first attributed. It is within these second-person interactions, where emotions and emotional expressions take center stage, that we find the key to unlocking the depths of mutual understanding.

« 8 » In Chapter 6, the authors skillfully integrate the second-person perspective to expound upon the intricate concept of expression. What is meaningful that can be perceived from the second person is consistent with what can be expressed. This encompasses not only emotions but also various other mental states, including physical sensations and intentions for actions. Under the purview of the second-person viewpoint, emotions cease to be enigmatic internal states, as they become accessible through the prism of emotional interactions. These interactions serve as predictive tools, offering insights into unfolding events. Natural expressions and involuntary bodily movements emerge as the external manifestations of one's internal mental state, serving as instrumental conduits that facilitate human communication. As individuals mature, they acquire more complex forms of expression, with oral communication emerging as the paramount mode. Contemporary discourse on expression introduces fresh perspectives that diverge from the authors' stance. Here, the authors place primary emphasis on contrasting ideas to bolster their proposition. On one end of the spectrum, Dorit Bar-On presents a neo-expressionist theory that delves into the origins of emotions and meanings (Bar-On 2013), while on the other, Robin George Collingwood (1938) formulates an expressive theory of art. In closing, the authors introduce Wittgenstein's Expressionism, which posits a continuum bridging natural and conventional expression. They engage in a thorough exploration of neo-expressionist descriptions, uncovering their inherent limitations. One salient limitation pertains to the inability to unveil all mental states and processes, implying that certain mental states may remain inscrutable through direct observation.

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« 9 » Next, in Chapter 7, the authors further argue that second-person attributions are fundamental. They elucidate the extent to which both first-person and third-person attributions are contingent upon second-person attributions. These attributions share a profound interdependence, as second-person interactions serve as the primary channel for comprehending mental concepts. Once individuals acquire these mental concepts, they gain the capacity to fathom the inner workings of others beyond the realm of immediate interaction. The first person, second person, and third person – these three distinct perspectives – assume pivotal roles in our daily comprehension of human cognition and social dynamics (Schilbach 2010). Their divergence arises from their unique knowledge bases. Let us commence by considering how individuals perceive themselves, encompassing their actions, intentions, and mental states. Undoubtedly, they can make implicit self-attributions grounded in the present attributes of their phenomenal self. During face-to-face interactions, individuals instinctively generate second-person attributions as a means of engaging with others. Conversely, when individuals observe someone with whom they are not actively interacting, they often adopt a third-person perspective to comprehend the other person. However, the third-person perspective might be more accurately described as a sort of pseudo-perspective. It can also be viewed as one half of a dyad, forming what is known as an "objective" perspective, which relies on one side's reading of the other's thoughts. To gain a profound understanding of ourselves, others, and the intricacies of human existence, it is imperative to cultivate sensitivity towards these three perspectives (Moore & Barresi 2017).

« 10 » In the eighth chapter, the authors explore the impacts of acknowledging the second-person perspective in the context of our conventional challenges in understanding the inner worlds of others. The second-person viewpoint offers a means to transcend the longstanding objective/subjective dichotomy pervasive in modern philosophy. The initial segment of the chapter delineates various issues and their basic characteristics, while the subsequent section elucidates how the second person functions as an instructional channel for grasping the thoughts of

others. According to the authors, the second-person perspective is a thorough psychological attribution perspective, in which transparent mental states are attributed by each to the other in the dynamic unfolding of face-to-face interactions. It is essential to emphasize that while these interactions entail emotional investment, emotional alignment with the other person is not a requisite; what matters is the presence of an emotional response. The authors conclude that individuals' psychological attributions are context-dependent and shaped by their interpersonal relationships (Leonhard et al. 2013b). Increased interactions lead to enhanced attributions, with historical patterns of interaction and prior mutual adjustments exerting a cumulative effect that improves individuals' capacity to predict one another's mental states. Notably, the second-person perspective remains influential even in contexts devoid of direct interaction. Subsequently, the authors discuss how acknowledging the second-person perspective in psychological attribution can facilitate the resolution of longstanding psychological issues.

« 11 » Chapter 9 delves into the realm of art from a second-person perspective, examining its significance in the domain of human experience, where interaction holds paramount importance. In the initial section, the authors employ musical examples to illustrate how the second-person perspective serves as a linchpin for understanding specific phenomena related to the human experience of art. They utilize the alignment between emotion and feeling as a key tool to elucidate how listeners engage with the emotions inherent in music (Gomila 2009). This emotional dimension also has limitations, namely that music cannot inherently convey complex emotions or explicit propositional content. In the second section, the authors illustrate their analysis with examples from the realms of drama and narrative form, addressing two renowned philosophical dilemmas about the intersection of art and emotion: the paradox of fiction and the paradox of tragedy. Both of these paradoxes engender perplexity when seeking to expound why individuals respond emotionally as spectators within theatrical contexts. The initial

paradox revolves around the question of why individuals invest emotional attention in fictional characters and scenarios, while the second pertains to the intricate emotions evoked by tragic narratives. In the final segment of this chapter, attention is directed towards the artistic characteristics of early interactions; the second-person perspective assumes a more important role in human engagement with art.

« 12 » In the concluding chapter, the author embarks on an exploration of potential connections between the second-person perspective and morality. The framework of the reciprocal-response model in second-person interactions serves as a critical pathway for enhancing our understanding of morality and its inherent characteristics. However, Strawson's naturalistic approach and his description of reactive attitudes fall short in their capacity to fully elucidate the origins of morality. In contrast, Stephen Darwall's perspective offers a more promising avenue for the advancement of moral psychology. It underscores the importance of aligning descriptions of second-person interactions with moral considerations, providing a valuable guide for moral development (Darwall 2006). Michael Tomasello (2020) contributes evolutionary insights into morality that strongly resonate with Darwall's second-person perspective. Tomasello's focus lies on cooperation, contending that specific forms of cooperation played a pivotal role in the evolutionary trajectory of humanity. He argues that the central role of a sense of responsibility and self-awareness explains the strength of moral motivation. Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that the evolution of morality is intricately intertwined with the evolution of cooperation.

« 13 » Each chapter holds substantial theoretical and practical significance in the study of second-person interactions. The book predominantly employs pragmatic approaches, such as illustration and comparative demonstrations, to delve into the realm of second-person interactions. Throughout the book, a multitude of instances showcasing second-person interactions are referenced. These examples demonstrate how second-person interactions play a crucial

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role across various contexts and specific scenarios. Crucially, the second-person perspective stands in tandem with both the first- and third-person perspectives, challenging the traditional binary separation between the two. The authors consider that attributions made from a second-person standpoint are foundational, with attributions from the first- and third-person perspectives heavily reliant on them. Through a comparative analysis of these three perspectives, it becomes evident that all three are indispensable, each fulfilling a pivotal function in our everyday interactions.

« 14 » The authors believe that the second-person perspective and interaction form a quite distinct phenomenon. This phenomenon lacked a separate field of study in the past and now requires further theoretical and empirical research. In the empirical realm, contemporary neuroscientists have conducted many experiments to study the phenomenon of inter-brain synchrony (for example, experiments on competition and cooperation between two or more persons), and inter-brain interaction and synchrony are further refinements of the person-to-person and face-to-face phenomena. These phenomena undoubtedly confirm the priority of second-person interactions. In fact, through the authors' discussion, the "reality" of the three perspectives has been dissolved, as they are all built on the basis of social interaction processes. Traditional first-person and third-person perspectives are based on the second-person perspective. The authors do not use constructivism terminology in the book, nor do they claim that "minds" are the result of social construction, but they agree that "minds" are the results of (social) interactions between people, which is very close to some conclusions of constructivism based on social activity or social interaction. Thus, the authors' book involves the possibility of being deeply interpreted based on constructivism.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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