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The lazy mindreader : a humanities perspective on mindreading and multiple-order intentionality

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Citation

Duijn, M. J. van. (2016, April 20). *The lazy mindreader : a humanities perspective on mindreading and multiple-order intentionality*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/38817>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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Issue Date: 2016-04-20

Human interaction is characterised by an ongoing polyphony of perspectives and perspectives-on-perspectives. Not only do we share and coordinate our own inner life with that of the people we interact with, but we also constantly make implicit and explicit reference to the intentional states of others who may or may not be present at the time of speaking, or who may even exist only in the imagined worlds of thought and fiction. In philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences, this polyphony has generally been conceptualised as a series of embedded layers, the so-called 'orders of intentionality': *A thinks that B understands that C expects...* (etc.). In this thesis it is argued that this conceptualisation stands in stark contrast to how multiple perspectives are handled in actual discourse and interaction. Based on the linguistic and narratological analysis of literary texts, newspaper articles, examples from spoken discourse, and stimuli from psychological experiments investigating multiple-order intentionality in the lab, a new perspective is offered on how we deal with networks of embedded and interlinked intentional states. The findings are discussed in the light of current theories about mindreading (also known as 'theory of mind'), discussing in particular cognitive models, issues of development and learning, and scenarios of how this capacity may have evolved in our lineage.

THE LAZY MINDREADER

Max van Duijn

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**A Humanities Perspective on Mindreading
and Multiple-Order Intentionality**

