

Dual-process theories and the personal-subpersonal hypothesis

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Data from reasoning tasks and other sources have led some psychologists to posit the existence of two distinct systems in human reasoning and decision-making – a view sometimes referred to as ‘dual-process theory’. Dual-process theorists have been less than explicit about the way these two systems are implemented, but the standard view seems to be that they are realized in distinct neural subsystems, which operate in parallel, albeit with some interaction. In this paper I outline an alternative reading of dual-process theories. The key suggestion is that the distinction between the two systems should be thought of as one of levels, corresponding to that between subpersonal processes and personal-level actions – a view which, I argue, has some very attractive features. Overall, the paper will take the form of a non-rhetorical question to dual-process theorists: Can this hypothesis accommodate some or all of the relevant data? If it can, then some rethinking of dual-process theories may be in order.