

The George Washington University Dept. of Philosophy presents the

2009-10 Thacher Lecture

José Luis Bermúdez

Professor of Philosophy

Washington University in St. Louis

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Marvin Center, Room 404

800 21st Street NW

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Mindreading in animals: Can animals think about thinking?

Comparative psychologists and ethologists have made bold claims about the mindreading abilities of nonhuman animals.

In this talk I evaluate these claims in the context of recent experimental work on animal mindreading. I distinguish different types of mindreading and offer a theoretical framework for thinking about the experimental data. There are, I argue, sound theoretical reasons for denying that nonlinguistic creatures can reason about beliefs, fears, and similar mental states. I show how experimental evidence of animal mindreading is better interpreted as showing an understanding of much simpler perceptual states.

José Luis Bermúdez is Professor of Philosophy at Washington University in St. Louis, where he holds a joint appointment as Director of the Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology program. He is also Director of the Center for Programs in Arts and Sciences. Dr. Bermúdez graduated from Cambridge University in 1988 and received his Ph.D. in 1992. Before coming to Washington University in St. Louis he was Professor and Chair of the Philosophy department at the University of Stirling, UK.

Professor Bermúdez's books include *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness* (MIT, 1998); *Thinking Without Words* (Oxford, 2003); *Philosophy of Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 2005); and *Decision Theory and Rationality* (Oxford, 2009). His textbook *Cognitive Science: An Introduction to the Science of the Mind* will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2010. [Click here](#) to visit his website.