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Evolutionary game theory studies basic types of social interactions in populations of players. It combines the strategic viewpoint of classical game theory (independent rational players trying to outguess each other) with population dynamics (successful strategies increase their frequencies). A substantial part of the appeal of evolutionary game theory comes from its highly diverse applications such as social dilemmas, the evolution of language, or mating behaviour in animals. Moreover, its methods are becoming increasingly popular in computer science, engineering, and control theory. They help to design and control multi-agent systems, often with a large number of agents (for instance, when routing drivers over highway networks or data packets over the Internet).

While these fields have traditionally used a top down approach by directly controlling the behaviour of each agent in the system, attention has recently turned to an indirect approach allowing the agents to function independently while providing incentives that lead them to behave in the desired way. Instead of the traditional assumption of equilibrium behaviour, researchers opt increasingly for the evolutionary paradigm and consider the dynamics of behaviour in populations of agents employing simple, myopic decision rules.