Introduction

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The central topic of this issue of *SYNTHESE* is the self-ascriptions of mental states of the intentional or propositional sort, such as perceptions, thoughts, desires, beliefs, intentions, and so on—that is, states that typically represent objects, events or states of affairs, in the form of some propositional content. Although this topic was traditionally philosophical, in recent years it has also attracted the attention of psychologists, particularly developmental and comparative, in the context of the dynamic and fast-moving research on naive psychology or naive theory of mind. As a result, the work of empirically minded philosophers and philosophically sensitive psychologists, interested in the naive theory of mind, is now exploring a largely shared territory of basic notions, theoretical positions, experimental data, as well as debates and disagreements. The articles that follow reflect this new theoretical *Zeitgeist*. Although they approach the self-ascriptions of intentional states from various perspectives and look at various implications of self-ascriptions, the papers are all consistently interdisciplinary.

Bob Gordon returns to his notion of ascent routines, which allows one to self-ascribe propositional attitudes—indeed, to begin such self-ascriptions in development—by using simpler, nonascriptional resources. Thus, one may report on one's belief by just reporting its content. This paper provides a revised method for ascent routines that answers the criticisms that the earlier account of ascent routines was limited to belief, and did not work for other propositional attitudes, unless it presupposes some recognition abilities.

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James Russell focuses on a competence model of acting and believing on the basis of knowledge. The model operates in three concentric circles: the periphery of input systems, a core that contains copies of peripheral representation, subject to executive competition, and a nucleus of operations on core representations. Russell argues that this model can explain why theory-of-mind tasks are a challenge to pre-school children, how the first-person authority of self-ascriptions becomes possible, and finally how inhibition is achieved.

Peter Carruthers explores the self-ascriptions of conscious thoughts and more generally the self-directed mind-reading abilities to illuminate the problem of the conscious will. His argument purports to vindicate the illusion of conscious will.

Shaun Nichols explores the children's belief in the immortality of mental states and the explanation of this belief in terms of our inability to imagine our own nonexistence. Nichols's analysis moves from Freud's account, found problematic, to recent psychological work on imagination, which could explain the immortality belief.

Radu Bogdan argues that self-ascriptions of thoughts and attitudes depend on a sense of the intentionality of one's own mental states, which develops later than, and independently of, the sense of the intentionality of the thoughts and attitudes of others. This sense of the self-intentionality grows initially out of executive developments that enable one to simulate (or mentally rehearse) one's own actions and perceptions, as genuine off-line thoughts, and to regulate such simulations. Self-ascriptions thus depend on the development of both executive functions and a self-directed theory of mind.

Joseph Perner, Daniela Kloo and Elizabeth Stöttinger argue that episodic remembering requires a particular sort of introspection and the understanding that first-person experiences represent actual events. The same sort of understanding is needed for image-based problem solving. Both the latter and episodic remembering are different from understanding false belief and emerge later in development.

Joelle Proust's paper explains the differences between metacognition (thinking about thinking) and metarepresentation, as a theory-of-mind ability to represent attitudes, including one's own. The main argument for the distinction is that metacognition manifests causal contiguity, epistemic transparency and procedural reflexivity, whereas metarepresentation manifests open-ended recursivity and inferential promiscuity.

David Olson examines how the children's ability to ascribe intentions derives from the parental practice of holding them responsible for their talk and action. Self-control develops as an ability to accept responsibility and hence self-ascribe intentions. Children can do that when they can form the ability to hold an utterance or rule in mind in the form of a quoted expression, and also when they grasp the causal relation between the rule and their action.

To avoid editorial favoritism, in case surnames would have been considered alphabetically, the order of the papers reflects the alphabetical order of the first letter of the first substantive notion in their titles.