

## Theory of Mind Revisited

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This project deals with indicators of self-consciousness and attempts to unite developmental approaches with philosophical investigations on this topic. One essential aspect of self-consciousness consists in the ability to ascribe mental states to oneself, which is apparently closely related to the ability to distinguish particular mental states from similar ones in others. This in turn requires the ability to take the other's perspective. Traditionally, this capacity has been thought to develop at the age of 4 to 5 years, when children first solve the standard 'false belief' task (Perner & Wimmer, 1983) as well as other related 'theory of mind' tasks. A number of recent studies, however, have been interpreted as showing that this ability is present much earlier, maybe as early as in the first year of life (e.g., Surian, Caldi, and Sperber, 2007; Kovacs, 2009). However, the methodological approaches differ dramatically between the classic theory of mind tasks and the more recent infancy tests. One crucial difference seems related to the level of explicitness of the understanding of beliefs. Therefore, a thorough philosophical investigation is needed that elucidates the 'implicit-explicit' distinction, both on the level of response measures (verbal responses to verbal questions versus looking-time measures) and on the level of the object of investigation (beliefs).

The postdoctoral project aims at a broad and philosophically informed review of the theory of mind literature with a special emphasis on methodological evaluations and the consequences of this type of research for our understanding of self-consciousness.

It is also planned that the postdoctoral researcher gets the chance to assist and work with developmental psychologists whose research focuses on exactly this topic in order to establish genuinely interdisciplinary cooperation between philosophy and developmental psychology focusing on social neuroscience. This opens up the possibility to develop methodological and content-related critical perspectives on the hot topics in the area of developmental psychology.

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