1. Chair’s address with affiliation, email and phone number.
2. Draft title of the proposed symposium and titles for each of the individual talks.
3. Summary of symposium, max. 250 words, for use in printed material.
4. List of speakers, affiliations, email and mailing addresses (Chairs should have secured prior agreement from speakers).
5. Time allotted for each talk (include time for discussion and questions)
6. Summary or abstract of each individual talk, max. 150 words.
7. Audio/Visual requirements.
8. Brief biographies of all speakers.
9. Proposals should be no more than 6 pages in length.

Joint Attention and Joint Action: Simple or Reducible?

*Summary*

Joint attention and joint action are a cornerstone of the social. As is increasingly recognized by psychologists and philosophers, these joint phenomena also play a key role in explaining the development of communicative (including linguistic) capacities, self-awareness and abilities to understand other subjects. Despite exciting recent developments in cognitive science, logic, and game theory many challenges remain.

One such challenge we call the *Reduction Question.* Can joint phenomena can be reductively explained (where the reduction base would be individual phenomena) or are they in some sense primitive? Thus, there are lively debates about whether collective intentionality can be explained in terms of particular sets of interlocking individual intentions, or whether joint attention can be analysed as attending to someone else’s attention.

The Reduction Question bears on at least two practical concerns. The first is the developmental role of the capacity for joint attention and action. What function you ascribe to a creature’s capacity for joint engagement depends on whether you think that this creature’s psychological constitution is of a fundamentally social kind. The second concern is whether there are mechanisms, such as neural correlates, that specifically undergird joint phenomena. Whether you allow for specific such mechanisms depends on whether you think of these phenomena as *sui generis*.

The symposium addresses these and related questions. The first speaker presents an array of relevant psychological evidence in order to demarcate possible lines of argumentation. The second speaker approaches the issue by investigating what scientific conjectures about a role for joint action in grounding the emergence, in evolution or development, of social cognition must presuppose about the metaphysics of action. The third speaker will present three ways of thinking about joint attention – simulation theory, theory theory, and the relational view – and will argue that the issue of reduction in joint attention is of relevance for this debate.

*List of Speakers*

Daniel Richardson

Stephen Butterfill

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Axel Seemann

Associate Professor

Department of Philosophy

Bentley University

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*Time Allotted*

The symposium opens with a fifteen-minute introduction by the chair. Each talk will last twenty minutes and will be followed by a fifteen-minute discussion.

*Abstracts*

Could Joint Action Ground Social Cognition? (Stephen Butterfill)

Could joint action explain how sophisticated forms of social cognition emerge in evolution or development? There is an obstacle to supposing that it could. On nearly all accounts, the joint-ness of joint action requires a distinctive kind of intention (Searle) or a distinctive structure of ordinary intentions (Bratman); or else it requires a distinctive kind of reasoning (Gold & Sugden), subject (Helm), reliance (Alonso) or commitment (Gilbert, Roth). This talk will argue that no such distinctive ingredient is needed. The argument involves constructing an account of joint action without appealing to any distinctive ingredients at all. The key to this construction is to notice that earlier researchers have taken for granted an underlying metaphysics of action which is unjustifiably and artificially restricted to cases involving just one agent. This matters for understanding what joint action demands of agents’ cognitive and conceptual powers. Depending on the agents’ situations, joint action may in practice demand various kinds of ability to coordinate and share; but none of these particular demands are intrinsic features of joint action. If this is right, basic forms of joint action presuppose no more conceptual sophistication than abilities to act and we have removed one obstacle to understanding how joint action might ground sophisticated forms of social cognition.

The Simplicity of Joint Attention (Axel Seemann)

For us both to jointly attend to an object involves two things (at least). We both have to be attending to the same thing. And each of us has to be aware that we are attending to the same thing. So much is uncontroversial. The question of what it takes to meet the second condition, however, is hotly debated. Do you have to deploy a general theory of mind? Do you have to be able to simulate my perspective? Or do you have to possess a capacity for intersubjectivity in order to gain access to my embodied state of mind? This talk will suggest that this apparently intractable debate can be sharpened by focusing on the issue of whether or not joint attention can be reductively analysed. Thinking about the second condition of joint attention in these terms makes it possible to interpret an array of psychological evidence in a new and insightful way. This interpretation provides the basis for an argument that in humans (and, arguably, non-human primates too), joint attention is a simple, non-reducible capacity.

*Audio-Visual Requirements*

The speakers need a screen projector that can be accessed from a laptop.

*Speaker Biographies*

Axel Seemann is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Bentley University. He was a postdoc at UC Berkeley and did his graduate work at the LSE. His main research interest is in social cognition; much of his recent work has been concerned with joint attention. In 2009, he hosted an international conference on joint attention, which resulted in an interdisciplinary anthology he edited for MIT Press (forthcoming 2011). He has most recently published in the *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, the *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, and *Inquiry*, and has contributed to various anthologies.

Stephen Butterfill studies philosophical issues in developmental and cognitive psychology. He is currently working on collaborative and individual projects in roughly four areas: metaphysical and psychological aspects of joint action; intention and motor cognition; cognitive bases of theory of mind abilities; and perception of causation, speech and color. Some of this work has been published in the *Philosophical Quarterly* and *Psychological Review*. After graduate work at Oxford he held a junior research fellowship at Cambridge and is currently Associate Professor of Philosophy at Warwick University.