

Summary:

My overall impression is very favourable. I found the material in the book synopsis very interesting and stimulating. The book will be welcome addition to the market as the first to provide a unified overview of, and introduction to, issues in cognitive development of philosophical import. Judging from the synopsis it promises to be an accessible and engaging introduction to these themes.

Professional philosophers whose work occasionally interface with issues in cognitive development will appreciate the opportunity to turn to this integrated account, both to get an overview of the empirical and theoretical state of the art in psychology, and to get a sense of the options for an account of their philosophical bearing. The book is also likely to appeal to advanced undergraduates and graduate students in the philosophy of psychology, especially those who are eager for a resource that is at once rich with empirical detail and focused on the philosophical issues that may be at stake. Finally, students and professionals in psychology interested in – or confused by – the philosophical or ‘conceptual’ questions raised by cognitive development should find this book very useful.

Further thoughts are offered in reply to various questions below. Some remarks prompted by one or two passages in the manuscript is added separately at the end.

1. *If you teach a related course, what text(s) are you currently using, and at what level do you teach?*

I do not.

2. *What do you think of the selection, range and level of the proposed contents?*

Given the decision to concentrate on cognitive development, they make sense. The subtopics within the field are diverse, ranging from the concrete and (apparently) comparatively simple, such as understanding object permanence, via the more abstract, such as understanding number, to the seemingly more complicated, such as understanding the goals and beliefs of other agents.

The book does not include some topics in developmental psychology that have been held to be of philosophical importance, or to be perhaps be tacitly informed (or even biased) by philosophical views. For example, Kohlberg's influential view of moral development has been seen by some as favouring a more formalist, universalist theories of ethics; critics of Kohlberg, such as Gilligan, have agreed there is some association between Kohlberg's view

and such ethical approaches, but objected that this is more of matter of Kolhberg's theory being biased by these ethical views than his theory providing independent support for the plausibility of the latter. I should stress it is far from odd that the author excludes such questions, as I presume moral development falls outside cognitive development on the operative understanding of the latter phrase in this context (one might see this as an implicit noncognitivism about moral judgement, or perhaps as just a stipulative restriction on the cognitive).

3. Are the contents pitched at an appropriate level for the market?

I would say 'Yes'. In the synopsis, some terms, such as 'core knowledge' that presumably will be unfamiliar to many philosophers are not explained. But I expect this will be remedied in the complete version.

4. Is there anything that you would add or remove from the contents?

The strike me as well balanced as proposed.

5. Can you list the relative strengths and weaknesses of your current text?

I am not sure whether this question applies, as I have not taught a course for which the proposed book would be suitable as the main text. The closest would be that I have taught courses on the philosophy of psychology, for which I've used Carruthers and Botterill's *The Philosophy of Psychology* (Cambridge UP, 1999) as a recommended overview. The latter book I find to be a very good, clear, and thematically well-balanced overview. But, in general, it does not go as deep into controversies in empirical psychology as this book aims to do.

6. Do you know of any other courses (either parts of a whole or dedicated courses) for which this book would be suitable?

The author observes that the book is 'suited to teaching a course on philosophical issues in cognitive development'. No doubt this is the ideal teaching setting for the text. As far as my experience is any guide, relatively few universities are likely to have course modules or regularly taught seminar series *specifically* devoted to philosophical issues in cognitive development. This does of course not mean that instructors or lecturers may not well decide to run a course devoted on these issues from time to time. However, a more likely setting for the book in taught seminar series, I would guess, would be to cover parts of the philosophy of psychology, or to cover philosophical aspects arising in a psychology course on cognitive development.

7. Would you use this text as a basis for teaching a course in this subject?

The setting in which I would be most likely to use this book would be an advanced undergraduate course or graduate course in the philosophy of psychology. In such a course, I might set aside (say) about a third of a full semester to philosophical questions raised by views about cognitive development. This book would be a great resource for this part of the course.

Another way of using the book would be to select cognitive development as one's special case of empirical psychology more generally, and use it as a unifying thread throughout a course on the philosophy of psychology. Many key issues in philosophy of psychology generally could well be approached through the lens of theories of cognitive development (e.g. the import and extent of modularity; the connection(s), or lack thereof, between language, rationality and consciousness; how we understand other minds; the connection between folk-psychological notions and the notion of scientific psychology). In such a setting, the book could be used as main text, perhaps alongside a general introduction to the philosophy of psychology, such as Carruthers and Botterill (cited above).

8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this book?

The below are of course given just on the strengths of the synopsis provided in the proposal.

One major strength of the book is that it appears to be very well informed by, and to provide a very useful introduction to and account of, recent work in the psychology of cognitive development, both of a more detailed empirical nature and a more general theoretical kind. For philosophers whose work connects with issues in cognitive development it is often difficult to know where to begin one's exploration of the empirical work, and often hard to tell whether one is getting balanced sense of the range of views and evidence currently on offer. The book will be very useful as a first port of call for such philosophers.

Turning to weaknesses: From the synopsis, I didn't always get as clear a sense of the connection between various philosophical views and claims about cognitive development as one perhaps might have wished for. On a general level, I would have appreciated some remarks on how questions in philosophy may be supposed to matter to cognitive development and vice versa; at least, this might be useful for the purposes of 'selling in' the importance of seriously engaging with cognitive development to an audience of philosophers, and vice versa to an audience of psychologists. Can we expect philosophical views of mind, language or agency, classical and contemporary, to have interesting implications about, or at least suggest certain positions on, cognitive development, where these implications have been disconfirmed or, as the case may be, confirmed? The author might seem to allude to cases of this sort, e.g. Davidson's views of the necessity of language for thought, views of the relative priorities of perception of X versus thought or talk about X, and views of what sorts of concepts or knowledge (e.g. of number) that may or may not be innate, or may or may not be learned. Some of these examples could be more clearly highlighted as such.

Another conception of the link with philosophy would be to say the psychology of cognitive development is no more (or less) closely connected with philosophy than biology or chemistry are. Just as the science of biology raises philosophical questions, for which reason there is the field of philosophy of biology, so does the psychological science of cognitive development, for which reason there should be the field of philosophy of cognitive development, as a sub-field of the philosophy of psychology. This way of motivating the field is independent of any prior interest in the philosophy of mind, action, or language, and holds good even if the latter turn out to have no interesting implications for cognitive development.

There are certainly ways of reconciling a 'philosophy of a special science' approach and a 'testing ground for general philosophy of mind, action, or language' approach to the philosophy of cognitive development. Hints at both roles for the field may indeed be found in the synopsis. It would however be nice with some explicit discussion of these matters (it may well be the author already intends to include this in the introduction).

9. Do you have any comments on the author's/editor's suitability for the task?

The author is highly suitable for the task of writing such a book. He has published highly relevant work not only in the leading philosophical and interdisciplinary journals, but also (unusually for a philosopher) in journals in developmental psychology itself. Moreover, the philosophical community at Warwick, of which he is a member, and which I am sure he will draw on and benefit from in writing the book, must count as one of the internationally leading research centres for the illumination of philosophical questions by work in developmental psychology and vice versa.

10. What other competing texts are you aware of (author/title/publisher/price/year if known)? How do they compare to the proposed title?

I am not aware of any directly competing texts or books.

11. Would you recommend that we publish this book?

Yes.

Some further remarks:

--- Should the current chapter 1 be shifted towards the back? The brief synopsis of ch. 1 already makes reference to ch. 2 and other later chapters, saying that materials will there be

considered for answering a key objection noted in ch. 1. Just from reading the synopsis, I got more of a sense of frustration or wanting to jump straight ahead than a sense of excitement from this ordering, but this might be different in the full version of course. Ch. 2 seems more self-standing, and to concern what is, at first glance at least, a simpler and more rudimentary form of knowledge, viz. of unperceived objects.

--- In ch. 6, the author writes:

“On the standard view, an action is directed to an goal in virtue of the action’s being appropriately related to an intention which represents this goal or some related goal. The *corresponding* view about understanding has it that understanding action involves understanding intentions and so having mastered propositional attitude psychology.” (my italics)

I select this passage as an example of a context where philosophical views are related to possible conceptions of psychological development. It would be nice, either here or elsewhere, to have some discussion of how such correspondences might be understood. Some philosophers of mind might contend that they seek to uncover the underlying nature or essence of mental kinds or relationships, and that their work has as little implications for the pattern of psychological development as chemical investigations of water has for the how kids come to think of various fluids. (This is no doubt an extreme view.) Even those philosophers who proclaim to offer conceptual analyses of our folk mental notions (say a Canberra style, Ramsey-Lewis type analysis) might say they concentrate strictly on the notions of normal adults, leaving open that children may progress to the understanding of these notions through stages at which they have various more rudimentary concepts whose nature their analyses do not address. No doubt there are also various views in the philosophy of mind that involve tighter connections with developmental claims. The point is just that a number of delicate and contested questions seem likely to arise over the existence and nature of the correspondences here.

--- Author writes in ch. 6:

“So far we have ignored the possibility that motor representations and processes play a role in understanding action. It is now well established that motor processes and representations are involved in observing actions—not only in producing them (Rizzolai & Sinigaglia 2010). Furthermore, some motor representations represent outcomes to which actions are directed (Jeannerod 2006). For instance, observing another grasping a cup can involve a motor representation of the outcome, of the cup’s being grasped, and not only motor representations of merely kinematic or dynamic features. Apparently, *then*, motor planning can be used in reverse: it can be used for inferring a goal from an observed action and not only for determining what to do in order to achieve a particular goal.” (my italics)

Just a very small comment here: For all that's said in the current version, the motor representation of the outcome, implicated in observing someone else extend their arm, might be a consequence of a prior representation of some outcome (as it perhaps must be, or tends to be, when the motor representation is involved in controlling the agent's own behavior), where this prior representation is obtained in some other way. I'm sure the

author will explain why these alternative views are less plausible in the full treatment.

--- I'm a bit surprised by the following remark in ch. 6:

"The considerations for the view that thought about objects depends on perceptual experience of them (see Campbell 2002) also support the view that all thought about actions ultimately depends on motor experience of them." (p. 12)

The author himself stresses that our perception of many linguistically encoded colour types seems to depend on learning the colour terms referring to those types, rather than our perception of those types enabling the learning of those colour terms. Similarly, our understanding of thought or talk of belief seems unlikely to depend on experience of belief, at least unless a strongly inner-sense like view of introspection of belief is correct. Likewise, in the number case, many would think, along Fregean lines, that the switch from finding one copse to finding four trees needs to be explained though a change in concept applied and not, or only secondarily, in terms of a change in perceptual experience.

Therefore, the question arises why one should think Campbell's view of the dependence of thought about X upon perceptual experience of X applies to thought about action, when it is apparently does not apply to thought of colour categories, beliefs, numbers, and many other things.