

## **REPORT 2**

### **Summary:**

Three years ago I reviewed a proposal (by Christoph Hoerl) for a book with a similar title and aim. The present proposal is somewhat different from Hoerl's and provides greater detail of the planned content, which is certainly useful. I assume that you still have access to my earlier comments, though I may recap some of the points here if my response to this proposal is comparable.

First, you ask for my "gut reactions" to the material and general comments on the proposal as a whole. I think the idea is very interesting and it could yield an attractive and stimulating volume. However, having read the proposal several times, I still fail easily to grasp its overall shape. The individual chapters are well described and quite engaging but the project as a whole is somewhat lacking in continuity and coherence. I wondered what might make it into an integrated volume and not just a collection of papers. A strong first chapter could introduce the basic aims and ideas, which then would be reiterated with different examples for the different topics of each chapter, and finally drawn together in the concluding chapter. At several points Butterfill refers to nativist and Vygotskian theories of development, with their contrasting emphases on biological versus cultural explanations of development. Perhaps this theme could be carried throughout the book, thus providing the needed coherence. Parenthetically, on this topic, I think (at least some) psychologists would dispute Butterfill's identification of the nativist theoretical stance with particular methodologies used in infancy research. Researchers with other theoretical perspectives utilize the same methods and provide different interpretations of the resulting data.

As for audience/market considerations: as I said in my previous review, I think the book would be appealing but challenging for the proposed audience of undergraduate and graduate students—primarily in philosophy but also perhaps in developmental psychology. It would be challenging for the philosophy students because they may lack needed background in psychology and, likewise, psychology students may lack needed background in philosophy. The book would probably best serve students in interdisciplinary programs like cognitive science, or in combined honours programs in philosophy and psychology, who would have sufficient knowledge in both areas.

I'm ill equipped to provide a market analysis because I'm not familiar with courses offered in philosophy departments. My own experience of graduate courses in psychology and education suggests that single textbooks are not often used. Rather, instructors compile reading lists from a range of materials. Of course, this may be because a suitable textbook does not exist. Possibly, if philosophical issues in cognitive development is a course taught in philosophy (or psychology) departments, then this volume would be taken up as the ideal text—though this is unlikely to be a large market. The book might also be used as a supplementary text for psychology department courses in cognitive development or theories of development (graduate or upper-level undergraduate). And certainly, it would also appeal to researchers, scholars, and advanced students in philosophy of mind, developmental psychology, developmental neuroscience, and cognitive science.

---

### **Responses to questions:**

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

Until my retirement this year, I regularly taught a graduate (master's/doctoral) level course on children's theory of mind. For this I did not use a text book but based the course on primary source articles in on-line journals, as well as selected chapters from monographs and edited collections. The proposed volume would fall into the latter category and I may well have used it in this way.

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

The topics are wide-ranging but all are relevant, appealing, and appropriate. The level is consistent and seems to be right for the proposed audience.

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

As I said in my previous review, I have very little experience with courses in philosophy. The material appears to be appropriate for upper level undergraduate and graduate courses in psychology and cognitive science— which I am more familiar with— at least for those students with an interest in philosophical questions (who are probably in a minority).

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

As I said in my response to question #2, all the topics are relevant and cover a suitable range of issues. As I said in my previous review, it is important that there is sufficient description of empirical methods so that the studies described in the various chapters can be properly comprehended, particularly for philosophy students who may not have a background in psychology.

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

As I said in response to question #1, I compile a reading list of journal articles and book chapters. This allows me to provide a good variety of readings on issues exactly pertinent to the course topics. However, a single text (if it covered the course material) might be more coherent and more appealing to students (and more likely to be kept in their book collection).

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

I do not know the courses taught in the philosophy department at my university. In psychology and education there are advanced courses in cognitive development where it might be used, although not as the main text because it would provide insufficient detail of empirical issues. It would be a useful additional text when considering theories of development. It is also possible that an instructor who read and liked the book would design a "special topics" course, using it as the text. Such courses quite frequently appear in our graduate course offerings.

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

Probably not, as a psychologist teaching cognitive development, except as an additional text, as suggested. But if I were to teach a course in theories of cognitive development, then yes, I might use it.

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

The strengths and weaknesses are similar to those I previously described for Hoerl's proposal, viz:

Strengths: It proposes an innovative way of presenting a fascinating topic that, as far as I know, is not addressed in any other book (except Alison Gopnik's *The Philosophical Baby*, cited in the proposal).

Weaknesses: The proposed book would be challenging as a textbook because of its interdisciplinary nature (as discussed above).

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

I know some of Butterfill's work, where it relates to my area of expertise in children's theory of mind. He writes well, and is a philosopher who appears to have a good grasp of and a genuine interest in empirical issues in psychology. Thus, he is well placed to write an interdisciplinary volume such as that proposed.

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

As Butterfill says, Gopnik's *The Philosophical Baby* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, CAN\$31, 2009) is the most comparable title. This book does appeal to students, even though it's intended for a more general audience. I am not aware of any other directly competing texts. Butterfill lists the volumes that come to mind as comparable to parts of his.