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FOLK PSYCHOLOGY: PLURALISTIC APPROACHES

Introduction to *Folk Psychology: Pluralistic Approaches*

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Abstract
This introduction to the topical collection, *Folk Psychology: Pluralistic Approaches* reviews the origins and basic theoretical tenets of the framework of pluralistic folk psychology. It places special emphasis on pluralism about the variety folk psychological *strategies* that underlie behavioral prediction and explanation beyond belief-desire attribution, and on the diverse range of social *goals* that folk psychological reasoning supports beyond prediction and explanation. Pluralism is not presented as a single theory or model of social cognition, but rather as a big-tent research program encompassing both revisionary and more traditionally inspired approaches to folk psychology. After reviewing the origins of pluralistic folk psychology, the papers in the current issue are introduced. These papers fall into three thematic clusters: *Folk-psychological strategies beyond propositional attitude attribution* (Section 2.1); *Enculturation and regulative folk psychology* (Section 2.2); and *Defenses of pluralism* (Section 2.3).

Keywords Folk psychology · Pluralism · Theory of mind · Mindreading · Mindshaping · Social cognition

Dedicated to Ron Giere (1938–2020), who forged the path.

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1 The origins of pluralistic folk psychology

"Folk psychology" refers to the way that ordinary people come to understand and navigate the social world around them. Contemporary philosophical discussions of folk psychology grew out of a series of philosophical and empirical debates in the 1980s and 1990s about the mechanisms and processes underlying our capacity to reason about the mental states of others, and, on that basis, explain and predict behavior (Carruthers and Smith 1996). Reading these debates of the 1980s and 1990s, one could easily come away with the impression that the key to understanding folk psychology was to explain how people predict and explain behavior by employing concepts of a limited subset of propositionally structured mental states—namely, beliefs and desires. Philosophers engaged in these debates widely presumed that we can make substantial progress toward a complete account of folk psychology by resolving the dispute between the two main theories of propositional attitude attribution: the Theory Theory (prominently defended by Jerry Fodor, Paul Churchland, and Alison Gopnik) and the Simulation Theory (prominently defended by Alvin Goldman, Robert Gordon, and Jane Heal). These two approaches to folk psychology represented "the only two games in town" (Stich and Nichols 1995, p. 50). From that vantage point, the most promising route towards understanding folk psychology seemed to be some kind of theory/simulation hybrid (Goldman 2006; Nichols and Stich 2003). Key participants in this debate rarely considered the possibility that folk psychological reasoning might have aims besides prediction and explanation, or that it might be supported by other inferential strategies. Into the 2000s, "folk psychology" continued to be associated with the appeal to beliefs and desires to predict and explain, as illustrated by Jaegwon Kim's definition of the term in his textbook, *Philosophy of Mind*: "Folk psychology is our ordinary way of thinking and theorizing in psychological terms, and our utilization of propositional attitudes to explain and predict what people will do" (Kim 2006, p. 15).

This emphasis on predicting and explaining behavior in terms of propositional attitudes is also reflected in the empirical literature on folk psychology, especially in the developmental domain. Nowhere is this more clear than in the field's focus on the false-belief task (Baillargeon et al. 2010; Tomasello 2018; Wellman et al. 2001; Wimmer and Perner 1983). A central debate in hundreds, if not thousands, of empirical studies on folk psychology concerns when and how children represent another agent as having a belief whose content differs from reality as the child subjects represent it. Facility with false-belief attribution is widely taken to be a core competency of mature folk psychology, and so the false-belief task has come to be viewed as the gold standard in developmental folk psychology. The capacity to represent another agent's beliefs is useful in certain contexts, of course. However, the mainstream empirical and philosophical research on folk psychology seemed to ignore other modes and purposes of social interaction, thereby giving the impression that representing beliefs and other propositional attitudes is all there really is to folk psychology. As theory and research on folk psychological understanding developed around an exclusive focus on propositional attitude attribution, alternative conceptions of folk psychology began to emerge.

Pluralistic folk psychology grew out of increasing uneasiness with the narrow terms of the debate and the reliance on experiments like the false belief task. Pluralistic folk

psychology presents a new way of thinking about social cognition. Its central thesis is that folk psychology involves a variety of strategies and goals. On this view, terms like *mindreading*, *mentalizing*, and *theory of mind* refer to more strategies than just propositional attitude attribution, and are used for goals beyond behavior prediction and explanation. We can, for example, predict and explain behavior using representations of a person's character traits, their situation, or their social role. We can also use our propositional attitude-attribution abilities to regulate another person's behavior, or to confirm our suspicions around them. Pluralistic folk psychology presents a less unified and more complex picture of human social cognition than the traditional Simulation Theory, Theory Theory, or even hybrid theories are able to accommodate.

Part of the inspiration for pluralistic folk psychology and its move away from propositional attitude attribution stems from research in the philosophy of science on the nature of theories and explanation. In 1996, Ron Giere (to whom we are dedicating this special issue) urged theory theorists to take a broader approach to the mechanisms involved in social cognition. He argued that Gopnik's account of social cognition, the child-as-scientist version of the Theory Theory (e.g. Gopnik and Wellman 1992) is flawed not because it rests on the Theory Theory, but because it gets scientific theories wrong (Giere 1996). On Giere's view, scientific theories are models, not sets of propositions. He suggests that we can understand social cognition in terms of models that we start to build as children through analogy and associations. Models are rich, detailed, and have different types of elements. Sets of propositions lack that richness and detail, and thus they fail to fully capture the variety of elements that comprise our social understanding. Moreover, like scientific models, the content and structure of social models are not a straightforward reflection of the world, and accuracy is not the only possible goal. Models are determined both by how the world is *and* by the practical needs of the model user (Godfrey-Smith 2005).

The idea that social cognition employs model-like structures has been taken up and developed by Maibom (2003, 2007), Godfrey-Smith (2005), and Spaulding (2018). Maibom (2007), for example, suggests that propositional attitude reasoning represents just one of several different types of models that we deploy in everyday social cognition: models for goal-directed behavior, social-normative models, and folk psychological models. While sometimes we use belief-desire models in order to understand what other agents are doing, at other times it makes more sense to think about agents as performing their roles in a social institution. From a pluralistic perspective, the core insight of the model-based approach is that folk psychologists might represent the same basic phenomenon—the behavior of other agents—in many different ways; which particular way it gets represented might vary as a function of the folk psychologist's goals and skills.

Even at this early stage, we see challenges to the standard picture regarding the goals and the strategies of folk psychology. For instance, Maibom (2007) points out that in some cases, accurately inferring an agent's mental states is actually irrelevant to the task of correctly predicting their behavior, as long as one correctly understands that agent's social role. Take, for instance, the interactions that a customer might have with a waiter at a restaurant. During these interactions, the customer could try and infer the waiter's beliefs and desires if they wanted, and these inferences may or may not be accurate. But ultimately, the folk psychological knowledge that matters for correctly predicting

the waiter's behavior is the customer's understanding of what waiters are and what they are supposed to do. With this knowledge in hand, whatever beliefs or desires the customer attributes to the waiter are largely beside the point. The only kind of situation in which the customer might really need to infer the waiter's propositional attitudes, Maibom suggests, would be if the waiter suddenly started behaving very unusually given their social role (for example, if the waiter sat down with the customers and started to eat their food). In this picture, predicting and explaining behavior through belief-desire attributions serves as a specialized folk psychological strategy that gets deployed in unusual circumstances, rather than as our default means of construing the social world. These arguments point to an important insight: the goals of accurately attributing mental states and correctly predicting behavior can and often do come apart.

Pluralistic folk psychology developed out of these challenges, integrating the philosophy of science with social psychology, developmental psychology, and comparative psychology. Kristin Andrews proposed pluralistic folk psychology as a new research program that would investigate a broad array of strategies and goals on the part of folk psychologists (2008, 2012). In her 2008 article "It's in Your Nature: A Pluralistic Folk Psychology," and developed in her 2012 book *Do Apes Read Minds? Toward a New Folk Psychology*, Andrews notably integrates social psychology into the discussion of folk psychology. She focuses on a number of additional methods that humans can use in dynamically interacting ways to predict and explain behavior, such as stereotyping, personality trait attribution, egocentric bias, and situation-based predictions.

While these additional methods of prediction and explanation have a long history in social psychology, they have not been well integrated with the debates about folk psychology. Take, for example, how we use our knowledge of situations to understand a person's behavior in a typical context like stopping a car at a red light. Rather than requiring propositional attitude attribution, we can appeal to the situation and the norms of that situation in order to predict the driver will stop the car. If the driver doesn't stop, an observer might engage in mentalizing to determine the driver's emotion, character, or reasons for running the red light. An observer might take the behavior to reinforce a racial or gender stereotype. Pluralistic folk psychology suggests that to understand a single action of a single person requires a dynamic interplay between multiple strategies.

Another important aspect of Andrews' account is the thesis that folk psychological prediction and explanation—which the Simulation Theory and Theory Theory often treated as interchangeable—in fact constitute distinct psychological activities with distinct aims. While the aim of prediction is accuracy, Andrews suggests that folk psychological explanations typically aim to satisfy what she calls a "curiosity state." Andrews defends this asymmetry thesis by appealing to work on explanation in the philosophy of science; her pragmatic account of explanation follows the idea introduced by van Frassen (1980) that an explanation is an answer to a why-question, and that a good explanation is one that satisfies the desires of the questioner.

Synthesizing her project, Andrews argues that Pluralistic Folk Psychology ought to be understood as plural with regard to the strategies and goals of folk psychology. Andrews presents the following statement of Pluralistic Folk Psychology:

1. One needs to be a folk psychologist to have robust success in predicting, explaining, and interpreting behavior.
2. Folk psychology is a social competence, which includes the ability to identify, predict, explain, justify, normalize, and coordinate behavior.
3. The social competencies of folk psychology are subsumed by a number of different cognitive mechanisms, and one's degree of success as a folk psychologist is a function of the number of competencies mastered and the degree of facility with the various competencies.
4. Intentional behavior is caused by any number of factors, such as moods, propositional attitudes, emotions, and so on, and sometimes influenced by other factors such as personality traits, dispositions, or historical facts.
5. To be a folk psychologist one must be able to recognize the existence of intentional agents and be able to discriminate intentional from non-intentional agents (Andrews 2012, pp. 11–12).

While Andrews' book focuses on pluralism with regard to folk psychological strategies beyond belief-desire reasoning, other philosophers explore pluralism about the reasons we engage in folk psychology in the first place. In traditional, propositional attitude-based approaches to folk psychology, it is often taken for granted that folk psychology is first and foremost concerned with the prediction and explanation of behavior. Insofar as predicting and explaining behavior enable us to successfully navigate and learn from the social environment, this is sensible enough. But this perspective leaves out another conception of folk psychology: *shaping* the social environments we inhabit in ways that make it easier to navigate. Instead of using folk psychology to describe the social world in all its complexity, authors exploring this conception suggest that we might instead use folk psychology to make the social world easier to understand, both for ourselves and for others.

In her initial statement of this idea, McGeer (2007) suggests that although we might regularly attribute various mental states to ourselves and to others, as the standard mindreading story has it, the function of such attributions often is to *regulate* our own and others' behavior, so that it conforms to our understanding of folk psychological norms about how people *ought* to think and act. For example, when declaring that one holds a particular belief, one becomes normatively compelled to act in ways that align with that belief, or else risk the criticism of one's peers; simultaneously, by using the norms of rationality as the basis for social sanction and criticism, one is able to keep the behaviors of one's peers in check. This normative, regulative use of folk psychology helps to carve out the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, which in turn shape our expectations about what people are likely to say and do. Thus, on McGeer's view, our folk psychological practices often are normative, and the function of these normative practices is to regulate ourselves and others.

Zawidzki (2013) presents a similar perspective on the function of folk psychology. He argues that our folk psychological practices primarily aim at what, following Mameli (2001), which he calls *mindshaping*. In contrast to traditional folk psychology with its focus on accurately describing the contents of minds in order to predict behavior, *mindshaping* refers to the social practices at work in ontogeny and in adults' ordinary social interactions that aim to *shape* minds to conform to predictable patterns

of behavior. Mindshaping comes in the form of imitation, pedagogy, conformity to norms, attribution of traits, narrative self-constitution, etc. By attributing traits and mental states to others, we are attempting to make others' minds more coherent and more predictable, which enables cooperation, the development of tools and language, and even accurate mindreading of people's mental content. Thus, the primary function of our social practices is to get ourselves and others to conform to certain ways of thinking and behaving to facilitate cooperative engagement.

In some cases, pluralistic principles have moved philosophers working within the traditional folk psychological frameworks to find ways to incorporate a broader range of constructs into their theories of mindreading. We see this especially in Evan Westra's work on the relationship between character trait-attribution, stereotyping, and theory of mind (Westra 2018, 2019a, b). Westra's "action-prediction hierarchy" model of mindreading is a version of the Theory Theory; however, it aims to address the pluralistic point that earlier versions of the Theory Theory failed to account for the role of stereotypes and character-trait attributions in the prediction and explanation of behavior. Westra's account proposes that character trait attribution is inherently mentalistic, and that character traits are always construed as dispositions to have certain classes of mental states and emotions (e.g. a generous person is viewed as disposed towards the desire to help others, the belief that doing favors is good, and feelings of satisfaction upon giving gifts). On this view, learning that a person has a given character trait is often a matter of inferring regularities at the level of their mental states from their observable behaviors; once a trait has been attributed to a person, this can then serve as evidence for subsequent mental-state attributions and behavioral predictions. Thus, trait attribution both informs and is informed by mindreading. Westra also argues that stereotypes are built around generic character trait attributions about certain social groups (e.g. "Canadians are friendly" or "librarians are shy"). This means that when a folk psychologist applies a stereotype to a person, they automatically call to mind certain trait attributions, which in turn inform their expectations about that person's mental states. In this model, stereotypes, character trait attributions, and mentalizing are all part of a single, tightly integrated system for predicting and interpreting behavior.

Shannon Spaulding's recent book, *How We Understand Others* (2018), combines many of the insights and elements of pluralistic views described in this section. She defends the central tenet of traditional folk psychological theories—that we attribute mental states in order to interpret and anticipate others' behavior—against various objections. However, taking inspiration from the work of Andrews, McGeer, Zawidzki, and Westra, she argues that traditional accounts are overly focused on a small subset of our folk psychological skills: attributing beliefs and desires in order to explain and predict behavior. While these constitute core components of our mature folk psychological capacities, focusing on this narrow set of skills gives a misleading picture of our real-life mindreading skills. She articulates and defends a version of pluralism with respect to the *input*, *processes*, and *output* of mindreading. She argues that social categorization, stereotypes, social biases, and situational context shape the information we take as input to mindreading. She considers how the various goals we have in a social interaction affect the processes and products of mindreading. Most traditional folk psychological theories, Spaulding argues, presuppose that our primary

goal in mindreading is precision or accuracy. Spaulding argues that while this is the case in certain conditions, in other contexts our primary goals are efficiency, confirming our preexisting ideas, validating our self-worth, manipulating others, etc. These different goals bring about various strategies for mindreading: careful deliberation, stereotyping for out-groups, egocentric projection for in-groups, and self-motivated reasoning. Moreover, our various goals generate different products of mindreading: various types of explanations of social behavior, mindshaping, moralizing and social signaling. Spaulding defends a version of Model Theory, which she argues can incorporate the diversity of the tools in our folk psychological toolkit. Her view, like Westra's, is situated in the context of traditional mindreading theories. It aims to both defend and enhance theories of mindreading.

This brief overview of pluralistic folk psychology makes clear that the view can take many different forms. Pluralistic folk psychology is a research program that, at its core, is committed to the idea that social understanding and interaction is a complex phenomenon that involves a diverse array of psychological processes. However, there is no *particular* model of social cognition, or indeed any particular *kind* of model that all pluralists are committed to. In this sense, pluralism is very different from the Theory Theory or the Simulation Theory. It is best understood as a research program that encompasses a wide range of models of folk psychology. Some of these approaches aim to replace standard theories of folk psychology, e.g., Andrews and Zawidzki. Some approaches also aim to reframe the function of folk psychology, e.g., McGeer and Zawidzki. Some pluralistic approaches even work within the framework of traditional theories of folk psychology and aim to enhance rather than replace or reframe the theories, e.g., Westra and Spaulding. Thus, pluralistic folk psychology is a "big tent" research program, and the papers in this special issue exemplify this broad array of pluralist views.

2 Papers in this topical collection

Drawing on a wide range of philosophical and empirical literatures, the ten papers in this topical collection each pick up on and extend the core insights of folk psychological pluralism. We see these papers as falling to three clusters: (Sect. 2.1) *Folk-psychological strategies beyond propositional attitude attribution*; (Sect. 2.2) *Enculturation and regulative folk psychology*; and (Sect. 2.3) *Defenses of pluralism*. The four papers in the first cluster—by Curry, Boisserie-Lacroix and Inchingolo, Díaz and Almagro, and Westra—can be read as developing the pluralistic thesis that folk psychology is supported by a wide range of strategies. The four papers in the second cluster—by Lavelle, Ilgaz and Allen, McGeer, and Zawidzki—build upon the pluralistic insight that the goals of folk psychology are often regulative, rather than predictive and explanatory, and explore the role of cultural and developmental factors in shaping the regulative process. The two papers in the last cluster—by Ghijsen and Fiebich—build upon the pluralist research program by engaging with its critics and offering proposals about how to understand the pluralist framework as a whole.

2.1 Folk-psychological strategies beyond propositional attitude attribution

Folk psychologists use a wide range of concepts and strategies to understand behavior. Among these strategies, prediction and explanation in terms of propositional attitudes has received the lion's share of the philosophical attention, while other aspects of the ways we understand other minds have been left underanalyzed. As a research program, one of the goals of folk psychological pluralism is to rectify this analytic imbalance. Early pluralistic proposals thus drew attention to the roles that representations of character traits, stereotypes, norms, and situations play in our folk psychological understanding. We see these four papers as continuing in this tradition of broadening the scope of folk psychological constructs discussed in philosophy.

2.1.1 "Street Smarts," by Devin Sanchez Curry

Devin Sanchez Curry's paper draws attention to an understudied type of folk psychological inference: attributions of intelligence. Starting from the observation that intelligence attributions are cross-culturally ubiquitous, Curry goes on to note that what constitutes intelligence is also culturally variable: While some cultural groups' conceptions of intelligence emphasize academic success, others emphasize social competence, while still others value the mastery of culturally specific skill sets. He also argues that attributions of intelligence are often used for a regulative rather than descriptive purpose, as a way to shape individuals' behaviors in socially desirable ways (see also Lavelle, this volume). This, Curry argues, shows that folk attributions of intelligence are not generally aimed at describing a set of causal psychological mechanisms (e.g. fluid g or working memory capacity). Drawing together ideas from psychologist Robert Sternberg and philosophers Gilbert Ryle and Daniel Dennett, Curry develops a positive account of folk psychological intelligence, which he calls *relativistic interpretivism*. On this view, folk attributions of intelligence track the disposition to succeed on a set of culturally prescribed puzzles. One important theme to emerge from this discussion is that we must be careful to distinguish between the contents of our folk concepts of intelligence and psychometric constructs of intelligence such as IQ and fluid g. The pluralistic framework is well-positioned to capture this kind of difference.

2.1.2 "Empathy for a reason? From understanding agency to phenomenal insight," by Celine Boisserie-Lacroix and Marcho Inchingolo

In a pluralistic spirit, Boisserie-Lacroix and Inchingolo's paper takes a critical look at the way that philosophical work on empathy has relied upon propositional attitude attributions and suggests that this perspective leaves out something very important. Their paper focuses on Karsten Steuber's notion of "reenactive empathy" (Stueber 2010), which characterizes empathy in terms of apprehending an agent's reasons for action, where reasons are taken to consist in belief-desire couples. Boisserie-Lacroix and Inchingolo argue that this basic belief-desire model overlooks the way we deploy empathy to understand *arational* actions—for example, when a person tears up the picture of a former romantic partner in a fit of sadness and hatred (Hursthouse 1991).

After arguing that belief-desire interpretations of how we understand these actions are implausible, the authors go on to lay out an account of what these interpretations leave out: *phenomenal insight*. This is the way that empathizers endeavor to understand not only another person's reasons, but also the experienced dimensions of another person's mental states. The function of phenomenal insight goes beyond (and is in some ways prior to) the predictive and explanatory functions normally ascribed to folk psychology, in that it captures how sometimes we just want to share in the felt experiences of others. This experiential aspect of empathy in turn affords us with a way to understand how emotions affect behavior, even in cases of arational actions. The authors also argue that the experiential form of empathy helps us grasp how certain reasons actually succeed in motivating a person to act, while others do not. In the context of a collection on pluralistic approaches to folk psychology, two things about this paper are particularly noteworthy: first, it highlights the limitations of approaching folk psychological processes like empathy in terms of propositional attitude attribution; second, it captures the fact that often our folk psychological goals extend beyond mere prediction and explanation.

2.1.3 "You are just being emotional! Testimonial injustice and folk-psychological attributions," by Rodrigo Díaz and Manuel Almagro

One of the promises of the pluralistic approach has been that it might form a bridge between the study of folk psychology and issues in social epistemology, connecting what we know about how we think about other minds with the way that we succeed in learning from one another. One way that this connection has been developed is by noting the implications of pluralistic arguments about the role of stereotypes in our folk psychology for social epistemologists' understanding of *testimonial injustice*, the phenomenon whereby non-epistemic factors such as gender and race skew the way we epistemically evaluate other people's claims (Fricker 2007). The basic idea here is that stereotypes contain folk psychological information—say, about the average emotionality or intelligence of certain groups (see Curry, this volume)—that can systematically distort the way agents assign credibility to a particular group of individuals.

In their paper, Díaz and Almagro take an experimental approach to this set of ideas, with a specific focus on gender stereotypes and testimonial injustice. They consider the claim that women are viewed as more emotional than men, and that this leads to their claims being taken less seriously because highly emotional individuals are viewed as less credible. Across two studies, they investigated how attributions of emotionality and the gender of a speaker affected attributions of credibility. Somewhat surprisingly, while the authors found a significant negative correlation between emotionality and credibility, they found no significant correlations between speaker gender and emotionality or speaker gender and credibility. In other words, while participants in these studies treated speakers they viewed as more emotional as less credible, neither their attributions of emotionality nor their judgments of credibility varied as a function of the speaker's gender. Thus, these studies did not support the hypothesis that gender stereotypes lead to testimonial injustice. In their discussion, the authors are careful to note that their results are compatible with the reality of testimonial injustice; rather,

they suggest that the effects of stereotypes on attributions of credibility might be dependent on contextual and motivational factors not systematically manipulated in these studies. We think that experimental papers like this one stand to greatly enrich the literature on pluralistic psychology, and that they provide a model for how we might go about testing specific hypotheses about aspects of folk psychology that go beyond propositional attitude attribution.

2.1.4 "Folk personality psychology: mindreading and mindshaping in character trait attribution"

Westra's paper focuses on the attribution of character traits as a folk psychological strategy, and the extent to which it fits into a broader pluralistic framework. The paper is divided into two parts, the first of which explores the extent to which character trait attribution is dissociable from mindreading more generally, and the second of which looks at the ways that character-trait attribution might function as a form of mindshaping. In the first part of the paper, Westra surveys a range of data on mindreading and trait attribution in neurotypical adults, people with ASD, infants, and young children, and argues that the weight of the evidence supports a mindreading-based view of trait attribution. In the second part of the paper, Westra focuses primarily on the regulative dimensions of moral character judgments specifically. He identifies three ways that attributions of moral character traits can have regulative, mindshaping effects: virtue-labeling, gossip about traits, and narrative-based forms of moral pedagogy. Because it strongly emphasizes the role of mindreading in both the attributive and regulative uses of character judgment, Westra's version of pluralism remains quite close to traditional, Theory Theory accounts of folk psychology. Thus, if the pluralistic framework encompasses a wide spectrum of different approaches to social cognition, Westra's view represents the more conservative end of this spectrum: it allows that propositional attitude attribution alone does not exhaust the range of folk psychological processes that we apply in our day-to-day lives, but its account of other folk psychological processes—or at least, trait attribution—is still grounded in a traditional mindreading-based framework.

2.2 Enculturation and regulative folk psychology

As discussed above, one of the most thought-provoking ideas to come out of the pluralistic framework has been the thesis that folk psychology often plays a regulative function, corralling our habits of thought and action into normative molds that make us more predictable and interpretable to one another (and to ourselves, as Zawidzki argues in his contribution to this volume). This mindshaping phenomenon is closely tied to the process of enculturation: the distinctive folk psychological norms that we acquire from our local cultural environments can determine which sociocognitive strategies we use in different social contexts. The papers in this section all engage with different aspects of this relationship between culture and regulative folk psychology: the role of first-personal mindshaping in making ourselves interpretable to others; the relationship between regulative folk psychology and enculturation; the variability in folk

psychological practices that we observe across cultures; and the way children acquire their culturally unique folk psychological competencies through social interactions.

2.2.1 "The impact of culture on mindreading," by Jane Suilin Lavelle

The main focus of Lavelle's paper is the broad diversity in folk psychological practices that emerges across different cultures. To make sense of this variability, Lavelle applies Spaulding's (2018) distinction between the *goals* of folk psychology (e.g. whether we aim to accurately predict a person's actions, or to shape their actions to make them more predictable) and *methods* of folk psychology (e.g. whether we use mental states, stereotypes, or traits to explain a person's actions). Surveying cross-cultural evidence comparing the folk psychological practices of North American, East Asian and South Asian populations, Lavelle illustrates how people in different cultures often use different sets of folk psychological methods to achieve the same social goals, and also the same folk psychological methods to achieve distinct social goals. Some of these differences have even been observed in cross-cultural neuroimaging research, suggesting that the mechanisms of social cognition may become differently tuned depending on an individual's social environment. Lavelle then goes on to argue that the importance of this variability has been underrated in traditional debates about folk psychology, which have tended to view predicting and interpreting behavior in terms of propositional attitudes as a human universal; indeed, this narrow focus may itself be an artifact of the culturally local conception of folk psychology that these philosophers and scientists find familiar. Ultimately, Lavelle concludes that while some basic forms of mental-state attribution might be universal, this fact vastly underdetermines the range of folk psychological practices that people deploy in their day-to-day lives.

2.2.2 "(Co-)Constructing a theory of mind: From language or through language?" by Hande Ilgaz and Jedediah Allen

While Lavelle's paper establishes a wide range of cultural variability in the kinds of folk psychologies that people display as adults, Ilgaz and Allen's paper can be read as a careful discussion of the different ways that those different folk psychologies might emerge from children's early social and linguistic experiences, and how that socialization process ought to be studied. Their paper starts with a contrast between two ways of understanding how linguistic experience drives the acquisition of folk psychological competencies: the Theory Theory (TT) and the Socio-Cultural theory (SC). While TT posits that children's folk psychological competencies are the product of an observation-based theorizing process that gets applied across social and nonsocial domains, the SC approach argues that children's social interactions and the specific action affordances and relationships that they create play a special developmental role that is not reducible to observation and hypothesis testing. One challenge for distinguishing these approaches empirically is that both the TT and the SC predict that children's exposure to folk psychological vocabulary affects their socio-cognitive development. To address this challenge, the authors suggest that experimenters need to measure not only children's overall exposure to psychological terms, but also the specific kinds of interactive contexts in which those terms get used—for example,

whether a speaker is describing their own psychological states, the states of their interlocutor, or the states of a third party, and whether these expressions arise during regular conversations, playtime, or storytime. For the TT perspective, the authors argue, these differences in context should not matter, since that kind of learning process is geared towards abstracting away from particulars and towards broad generalizations. For the SC perspective, what matters for the learning process are the specific social affordances created in the immediate interactive context. Thus, from an SC perspective, the study of the development of folk psychological understanding needs to adopt more fine-grained coding schemes in order to understand how language (and through it, culture) shapes how children learn about other minds.

2.2.3 "Enculturating folk psychologists," by Victoria McGeer

McGeer's paper also takes up the issue of culture in folk psychological practice, this time with the aim of situating the regulative approach to folk psychology within the broader framework of extended and enculturated cognition (Menary 2012). In this framework, acquiring the habits, skills, and norms of one's culture does not just enhance or extend our basic cognitive capacities, but instead actively and continuously rewrites them. This is also the case, McGeer suggests, with the folk psychological norms of one's local culture. Through an extended analogy with the way a lifelong rugby fan comes to internalize the norms and rules of that game and gains a form of understanding that is inaccessible to the rugby novice, McGeer develops a picture of how local folk psychological norms shape our socio-cognitive capacities. This enculturation process simultaneously helps us to skillfully understand and interact with other members of one's culture, while also molding our patterns of thought and action so that we become more interpretable ourselves. Thus, folk psychology is externally scaffolded by the norms of one's cultural environment, which shape social cognition from the outside-in. One notable feature of McGeer's account is that it does not aim to diminish or minimize the role of traditional forms of mindreading in everyday social cognition (contrary to some critics of the traditional approach to folk psychology), but rather to show how pervasive mindreading can emerge from the regulative enculturation processes she describes.

2.2.4 "A new perspective on the relationship between metacognition and social cognition: metacognitive concepts as socio-cognitive tools," by Tadeusz Zawidzki

In his paper, Zawidzki applies the mindshaping framework to a longstanding debate about the relationship between social cognition and meta-cognition, or thinking about one's own thoughts. Traditionally, this debate has centered around questions of developmental and evolutionary priority: do first-personal, meta-cognitive forms of folk psychological reasoning (e.g. introspection) precede third-personal mindreading (as in the classic simulation theory), or is meta-cognition a kind of mindreading directed at the self (as in in some versions of the Theory Theory)? After outlining the specific limitations of each approach, as well as their shared commitment to a limited, spectatorial conception of social cognition (Hutto 2004), Zawidzki proposes a novel alternative: if

we think of the function of folk psychological concepts[1] as aiming to regulate rather than simply describing the thoughts of others, the earlier debate is effectively dissolved: both meta-cognitive and third-personal uses of folk psychological concepts help us to adhere to social norms that make us more predictable interactive partners. In other words, meta-cognitive concepts are really just another kind of sociocognitive tool to help us adapt to our local cultural environments. Additionally, Zawidzki's account makes room for another, more basic, nonconceptual form of meta-cognitive process that helps human beings acquire and master our local explicit folk psychological skills, which he calls "procedural metacognition" (Proust 2013). Taking stock, Zawidzki argues that his model overcomes all the major disadvantages of traditional mindreading-first and meta-cognition-first accounts, while also breaking the debate about metacognition and social cognition free from the spectatorial mold.

2.3 Defenses of pluralism

The last pair of papers in this collection are concerned with the framework of folk psychological pluralism itself, and the way this framework relates to other theories of social cognition. This too is an important direction for proponents of pluralistic folk psychology. As it has gained adherents, pluralistic folk psychology has also faced various criticisms from proponents of more mainstream views. Because it is an approach that rejects idealized models of social cognition and embraces its messiness and complexity, the pluralistic approach to folk psychology is sometimes prone to misinterpretation and conflation with other views. Papers like these help to clarify the distinctive, often nuanced contributions that pluralistic folk psychology can make.

2.3.1 "Traits, beliefs and dispositions in a pluralistic folk psychology," by Harmen Ghijsen

Ghijsen's paper outlines three potential challenges to the pluralistic folk psychology framework, which he calls *the prediction problem*, *the interaction problem*, and *the difference problem*. Ghijsen's presentation of these problems is framed around a recent debate within the pluralism literature regarding whether character trait concepts are represented as mentalistic dispositions or as purely behavioral ones (see also Westra, this volume). The prediction problem, which Ghijsen attributes to Westra (2018), argues that the behavioral approach cannot explain how we generate reliable trait-based behavioral predictions in particular situations, because it does not explain how the predictor parses situations for predictive purposes. To fill in that gap, the predictor needs to appeal to representations of the agent's mental states and the way that they construe the situation. Ghijsen argues that the prediction problem can also be solved in another, non-mentalistic manner: instead of appealing to the agent's mental states, the predictor can just rely upon her own construal of the situation. The interaction problem

[1] Importantly, Zawidzki makes it clear that his account aims to explain how we use person-level, linguistically expressible folk psychological concepts. He distinguishes these from sub-personal, implicit forms of mentalizing (Butterfill and Apperly 2013; Zawidzki 2011), which he thinks do serve predictive rather than regulative functions.

concerns the general issue of how a pluralistic account should go about explaining the way that mindreading and non-mindreading processes interact to produce behavioral predictions (see also Fiebich, this volume). After raising some problems for Westra's (2018) hierarchical account of how this interaction works, Ghijsen suggests that a viable strategy for the pluralist might be to appeal to the Model Theory, wherein different folk psychological strategies get used depending on the goals and skills of the predictor (Maibom 2007; Spaulding 2018). The difference problem concerns whether, on a dispositionalist account of propositional attitudes, putatively distinct forms of folk psychological reasoning all end up collapsing into one and the same thing—namely, predictions in terms of behavioral dispositions. In reply, Ghijsen argues that the basic pluralistic folk psychology can overcome this challenge, provided that it gives a more fine-grained account of the different kinds of behavioral dispositions that different folk psychological strategies like trait attribution and belief attribution track.

2.3.2 "In defense of pluralist theory," by Anika Fiebich

In this paper, Fiebich sets out to systematically distinguish the pluralistic approach to folk psychology from neighboring approaches. For Fiebich, what is distinctive about pluralism is not the claim that we use a variety of strategies for social understanding, since this is also true of various theory-simulation hybrids and interactionist theories of social cognition. Instead, pluralism is distinguished by its rejection of what she calls the *default assumption*, which takes for granted the idea that one kind of folk psychological process is automatically engaged when we try to understand the minds of others. Pluralism recognizes that the mechanisms and aims of social cognition depend on a range of contextual factors. By the same token, Fiebich argues, pluralism does not represent an attempt to reconcile or integrate the theory–theory, simulation theory, or interactionism in one overarching theoretical framework. Because these different theories all adhere to different versions of the default assumption, and because they make other fundamentally incompatible assumptions about the nature of folk psychology, attempting to integrate them is a non-starter. Pluralism does however allow for integration at the level of cognitive mechanisms, by showing how and when different cognitive processes guide our folk psychological reasoning. The key to the pluralist approach, then, is to articulate principles for understanding when and why a given cognitive process—be it theorizing, simulation, trait attribution, stereotypes, or something else—becomes activated in a given context. Along these lines, Fiebich offers a survey of how different versions of pluralism spell out these principles, including Andrews' *normative* approach (Andrews 2015), Gallagher's interaction-based approach (Fiebich et al. 2016; Gallagher 2015), and her own *fluency*-based account (Fiebich and Coltheart 2015).

3 Conclusion

Inspired by the pluralistic framework, the articles of this special issue develop new approaches to folk psychology that explore the diverse methods that we employ and goals that we pursue in trying to understand one another. These articles show that

pluralistic approaches to folk psychology are being taken up by a wide range of philosophers and scientists, thereby enhancing our understanding of the diverse ways in which humans navigate the social world. This pluralistic turn in the study of social cognition enables us to make progress on a wide range of long standing questions about the metaphysics of mind and the philosophy of cognitive science, from the social dimensions of introspection, to the concept of intelligence, to the nature of empathy. The pluralistic folk psychology research program is a fruitful approach to studying these and many other social phenomena.

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