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THE MANIFEST IMAGE

THE NATURE AND STATUS OF FOLK PSYCHOLOGY

Ian Martin Ravenscroft

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
Australian National University

I declare that, unless otherwise indicated, this thesis
is entirely my own original work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Ravenscroft', written in a cursive style.

Ian Ravenscroft

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the nature and status of folk psychology. At the outset a distinction is made between the theory theory (internal) and the theory theory (external). The former posits a largely tacit, internally represented, theory of human psychology which facilitates the prediction and explanation of behaviour. The latter claims that our everyday talk about mental states implicitly constitutes a theory of the mind. Both the largely tacit, internally represented, theory of human psychology and the theory of mind implicit in our everyday talk about mental states have been labeled 'folk psychology'. To avoid confusion, I have called the theory posited by the theory theory (internal), *folk psychology (internal)*, and the theory posited by the theory theory (external), *folk psychology (external)*.

The theory theory (internal) is not the only existent theory of our capacity to predict behaviour. So-called *off-line simulation theory* also seeks to account for that capacity. In Chapter 2 I sketch off-line simulation theory and defend the theory theory (internal) against it.

In Chapters 3-5 the focus shifts to the nature and status of folk psychology (external). I defend a commonsense functionalist analysis of the states posited by folk psychology (external), and argue that Fodor's asymmetric dependency theory of content provides the correct account of the semantic properties of (external) folk psychological beliefs and desires. A variety of objections to functionalism exist in the literature. Chapter 5 is devoted to drawing the fangs of some common objections to functionalism, including the qualia problem and the difficulties raised by Ned Block and John Searle.

Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to the eliminativism issue. Arguments on both sides of the debate are examined and largely found wanting. Most pro- and anti-eliminativist arguments have focussed on the posits of folk psychology (external). I briefly consider some of the issues surrounding eliminativism and folk psychology (internal). Chapter 7 is devoted to eliminativist concerns about intentional non-naturalism.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I consider whether folk psychology (external) might form the basis of a scientific investigation of the mind. Arguments to the effect that it will not are rejected, and an extended example of scientific research which rest heavily on folk psychology (external) is described.

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