

# PH9GF-20 Origins of Mind: Philosophical Issues in Cognitive Development

21/22

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Richard Moore

**Credit value**

20

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

How do humans first come to know about objects, causes, numbers, actions and minds? We will attempt to answer this question using a range of conceptual tools from philosophy to examine puzzles arising from some recent scientific breakthroughs.

More introductory information about the module is available here:

<https://origins-of-mind.butterfill.com/>

Among other resources, this page includes a longer introduction with some readings:

[https://origins-of-mind.butterfill.com/pdf/origins\\_of\\_mind.handout.pdf](https://origins-of-mind.butterfill.com/pdf/origins_of_mind.handout.pdf)

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

To introduce students to philosophical issues arising from findings about the emergence of minds in development.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

How do humans come to know about objects, causes, numbers, actions and minds? We will attempt to answer this question using a range of conceptual tools from philosophy to examine puzzles arising from some recent scientific breakthroughs. The question, which goes back to Plato or earlier, is challenging because it requires us to consider minds where knowledge is neither clearly present nor obviously absent. This is challenging because, as Donald Davidson observes, '[w]e have many vocabularies for describing nature when we regard it as mindless, and we have a mentalistic vocabulary for describing thought and intentional action; what we lack is a way of describing what is in between' (Davidson, 1999, p. 11). To understand the emergence of knowledge we need to investigate what is in between mindless nature and the sorts of cognition captured by commonsense psychological notions. In pursuing this investigation, you will learn about contemporary developmental findings, explore new philosophical issues raised by these findings and investigate their relevance to longstanding philosophical questions about the mind.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Critically assess and evaluate (1) the key claims and arguments of the core debates in philosophical developmental psychology and (2) the implications of these claims for current debates in the area of philosophy covered.
- Work autonomously to articulate their own view of the relative merits of conflicting theories and conjectures, and engage critically with other points of view.
- Demonstrate sound judgement and initiative in selecting appropriate philosophical and psychological literature for their investigation of a specifically circumscribed problem.
- Subject knowledge and understanding: students should be able to demonstrate an advanced understanding of the central arguments and substantive issues. This involves being able to understand and accurately report relevant findings from developmental psychology. They should be able to distinguish conflicting hypotheses and critically consider evidence for and against. Students should be able to identify philosophical questions arising from such findings, and to relate them to longstanding issues in philosophy.

## Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

## Interdisciplinary

This module lies on the boundary between philosophy and psychology and is designed to enable students to explore how research in these two disciplines can be integrated.

## Subject specific skills

Students will develop their abilities to understand a variety of research in developmental science and philosophy; to understand how philosophical positions can be informed by discoveries; and to combine philosophical and psychological methods in evaluating and elaborating theories about the origins of mind.

## Transferable skills

Students will develop familiarity with using and interpreting individual scientific research reports, as well as in drawing conclusions based on multiple, potentially conflicting reports. Students will develop analytical skills, and enhance their abilities to construct arguments and to identify objections to arguments.

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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (9%)
Private study	182 hours (91%)
Total	200 hours

### Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A2

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>	<b>Eligible for self-certification</b>
<b>Assessment component</b>			
5000 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)

Reassessment component is the same

## **Feedback on assessment**

Feedback on essays will be provided on the coversheet for the essay, addressing standard areas of evaluation and individual content.

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## **Availability**

### **Courses**

This module is Option list A for:

- TPHA-V7PM Postgraduate Taught Philosophy
  - Year 1 of V7PM Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V7PM Philosophy