

# PH9GF-30 Origins of Mind: Philosophical Issues in Cognitive Development

**21/22**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Richard Moore

**Credit value**

30

**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 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

Baillargeon, R., Scott, R. M., & He, Z. (2010). False-belief understanding in infants. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14(3), 110–118.

Baldwin, D. (1995). Understanding the link between joint attention and language. In C. Moore &

Bermúdez, J. L. (2003). *Thinking without Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bratman, M. (1987). *Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reasoning*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Butterfill, S. A. (2012). Joint action and development. *Philosophical Quarterly*, 62(246):23– 47.

Butterfill, S. A. and Apperly, I. A. (2013). How to construct a minimal theory of mind. *Mind and Language*, 28(5):606–637.

- Campbell, J. (2002). *Reference and Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carey, S. (2009). *The Origin of Concepts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carpenter, M. (2009). Just how joint is joint action in infancy? *Topics in Cognitive Science*, 1(2):380–392.
- Carruthers, P., Laurence, S., & Stich, S. (2005). *The Innate Mind: Structure and Contents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carruthers, P., Laurence, S., & Stich, S. (2006). *The Innate Mind: Culture and Cognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, E. V. (1993). *The Lexicon in Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clements, W. & Perner, J. (1994). Implicit understanding of belief. *Cognitive Development*, 9, 377–395.
- Csibra, G. (2003). Teleological and referential understanding of action in infancy. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, 358(1431), 447–458.
- Csibra, G. & Gergely, G. (2009). Natural pedagogy. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13(4), 148–153.
- Davidson, D. (1990). The structure and content of truth. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 87(6), 279–328.
- Davidson, D. (1999). The emergence of thought. *Erkenntnis*, 51, 7–17.
- Davidson, D. (2001). *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Elman, J. L., Bates, E. A., Johnson, M. H., Karmiloff-Smith, A., Parisi, D., & Plunkett, K. (1996). *Rethinking Innateness: A Connectionist Perspective On Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Fodor, J. (1981). The present status of the innateness controversy. In *Representations*. Brighton: Harvester.
- Fodor, J. (1983). *The Modularity of Mind: An Essay on Faculty Psychology*. Bradford book. Cambridge, Mass ; London: MIT Press.
- Franklin, A., Catherwood, D., Alvarez, J., & Axelsson, E. (2010). Hemispheric asymmetries in categorical perception of orientation in infants and adults. *Neuropsychologia*, 48(9), 2648–2657.
- Franklin, A., Clifford, A., Williamson, E., & Davies, I. (2005). Color term knowledge does not affect categorical perception of color in toddlers. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 90(2), 114–141.
- Gergely, G. and Csibra, G. (2003). Teleological reasoning in infancy: the naive theory of rational action. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7(7):287–292.
- Goldin-Meadow, S. (2003). *The resilience of language: what gesture creation in deaf children can tell us about how all children learn language*. Essays in developmental psychology. New York, N.Y.: Psychology Press.
- Hirschfeld, L. A. & Gelman, S. A. (1994). *Mapping the Mind: Domain specificity in cognition and culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoerl, C., McCormack, T., & Beck, S. R. (Eds.). (2011). *Understanding Counterfactuals, Understanding Causation: Issues in philosophy and psychology*. Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, M. H. (2005). *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jusczyk, P. (1997). *The Discovery of Spoken Language*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT.
- Leslie, A. M. and Keeble, S. (1987). Do six-month-old infants perceive causality? *Cognition*, 25:265–288.
- Shinskey, J. and Munakata, Y. (2001). Detecting transparent barriers: clear evidence against the means-end deficit account of search failures. *Infancy*, 2(3):395–404.
- Spelke, E. (1990). Principles of object perception. *Cognitive Science*, 14:29–56.

Whiten, A. (Ed.), *Natural Theories of the Mind: evolution, development and simulation of everyday mindreading*. Oxford: Blackwell.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

## 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 (6%)
Private study	282 hours (94%)
Total	300 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

	Weighting	Study time
7500 word essay	100%	

## 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-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts
  - Year 1 of V7PN Philosophy and the Arts
  - Year 2 of V7PN Philosophy and the Arts