

PH998-30 Topics in Philosophy of Mind and Language

24/25

Department

Philosophy

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Naomi Eilan

Credit value

30

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

PH998 Topics in Philosophy of Mind and Language

Module aims

There is increasing interest in recent years in the role played by the fact that we are social creatures in determining the nature of our mental lives. We will be concerned with distinguishing strengths of claim in this area and focusing in particular on strong anti-individualism-- understood as the claim that our mental lives are, in various ways, essentially social. Phenomena we will be looking at may include: second person awareness; joint attention; joint action; knowledge and understanding of other minds; theories of communication, and its role in making thought about others, ourselves, and the world possible.

The main aim is to engage in detail with some arguments that have played a central role in contemporary discussions of anti individualism in the philosophy of mind, and to examine the intersection of issues in the philosophy of mind and ethics in arguments for particular forms of anti individualism.

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.

The two general questions that will guide us throughout are:

- I. What does it take to support strongly anti individualist explanations of our mental lives?
- II. What is the relation between claims in the philosophy of mind and ethics in giving shape to anti individualist accounts of the mind.

These general questions will be pursued by addressing particular questions, which will include:

1. What is the effect of adopting strong anti-individualism on the account we should give of, among other things: i. the nature of self-awareness and knowledge, and its relation to our awareness and knowledge of others; ii. the role of communication in enabling knowledge and understanding of others, and ourselves.
2. What is the nature of second person thought, and how does appeal to it
i. Figure in accounts of our knowledge of others and ourselves?
ii. Serve to make issues in ethics internal to the philosophy of mind.
3. How should we explain the sense in which episodes of joint attention, and joint action, involve the 'sharing ' of experiences and intentions? What is the role of joint attention and joint action in shaping our mental lives?
4. What role does appeal to developmental psychology play in justifying and giving form to anti individualism?

Learning outcomes

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

- By the end of the module the student should have advanced knowledge and understanding of some current key issues that arise in the areas of philosophy of mind and philosophy of language.
- By the end of the module the student should be able to demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding of some complex texts in the areas of the philosophy of mind and language covered in the module.
- By the end of the module students should be able to present views and arguments and develop original critical assessments of those arguments orally and in writing.

Indicative reading list

Particular readings will be suggested for each session. Useful background reading:

Michael Tomasello. (2014) *A Natural History of Human Thinking*

Michael Tomasello. (2019) *Becoming Human: A Theory of Ontogeny*

Donaldson, D. (2001) *Subjective, Intersubjective Objective.*

Eilan, N., Hoerl, C., McCormack, T., & Roessler, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Joint attention: Communication and other minds: Issues in philosophy and psychology.* Clarendon Press/Oxford University

Moran, Richard. (2019) *The Exchange of Words: Speech, Testimony, and Intersubjectivity* OUP

Eilan, N. (2014). Special issue: The second person. *Philosophical Explorations*, 17(3), 265–387.

Interdisciplinary

Writings by a selection of developmental psychologists will be discussed in the seminar

Subject specific skills

- i) The ability to understand philosophical issues and arguments
- (ii) The ability to critically engage with philosophical ideas and arguments
- (iii) The ability to articulate philosophical issues and arguments
- (iv) The ability to read philosophical texts, including an ability to understand and explain technical philosophical vocabulary from these historical texts, and debates about interpretation of certain key terms.

Transferable skills

- (i) The ability to communicate information (verbally and in written form) to people both expert and non-expert in the field.
 - (ii) The ability to analyse, evaluate, critique and apply complex information gathered from reading, reflection, reasoning or communication.
 - (iii) The ability to effectively manage schedules and deadlines
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
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.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A4

	Weighting	Study time
5000 word essay	100%	
7500 word essay		

Feedback on assessment

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

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7P2 Postgraduate Taught Continental Philosophy
- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PM Postgraduate Taught Philosophy
- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts