PHIL10131: *Metaphysics of Mind*

2012-13

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Department of Philosophy
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
University of Edinburgh
1. Course Aims and Objectives

This course examines some central questions at the intersection of Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind: questions that concern the fundamental kind of thing that minds are; how they fit into a physical world; and difficulties that face the empirical study of mental phenomena. The first few weeks will deal with general issues pertaining to physicalism and the mental, before we progress to investigate contemporary approaches to particular features of the mind, such as consciousness, the self, and the nature of cognition.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should
- Have an in-depth understanding of core arguments in the metaphysics of mind
- Understand central issues in contemporary philosophy of mind, e.g. non-reductive materialism; persistence of the self over time; the extended mind hypothesis; phenomenal consciousness.
- Be able to analyse these arguments and offer their own evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses
- Be able to clearly explain these arguments in a written format.
- Gain transferable skills in research, analysis and argumentation.

3. Seminar Times and Locations

Wednesday 11.10am – 1pm, Dugald Stewart Building room G.06.

4. Seminar Content

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>16 January</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Lavelle</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>23 January</td>
<td>Non Reductive Physicalism</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>Mental Causation 1</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>Mental Causation 2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13 February</td>
<td>Varieties of Functionalism</td>
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<td>INNOVATIVE LEARNING WEEK – NO SEMINARS</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>The Extended Mind</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>Kripke's Argument against the Identity Theory</td>
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Week 8  13 March  Chalmers’ Zombie Argument  Kallestrup
Week 9  20 March  Jackson's Knowledge Argument  Kallestrup
Week 10  27 March  Consciousness and the Brain  Lavelle
Week 11  3 April  Personal Identity  Lavelle
Week 12  10 April  Revision and Essay trouble-shooting  Lavelle

5. PPLS Undergraduate Student Handbook

The PPLS Undergraduate Student Handbook has more information on Student Support and academic guidance; late coursework and plagiarism; illness and disability adjustments, and useful sources of advice.

The Handbook can be found here:
http://www.ppls.ed.ac.uk/students/undergraduate/documents/PPLS_Student_Handbook_FINAL.pdf

6. Readings

Several of the class readings will be taken from Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind (Ed’s Brian McLaughlin & Jonathan Cohen, Blackwells, 2007) [CDPM]. We will also make extensive use of the Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind [OHPM] on reserve in the main library. Both of these books are available in Blackwells on South Bridge.

Week 1: Introduction.

We will begin with a quick overview of the central topics to be covered in the course, and discuss class structure and assessment. We will also review some of the main positions that have been defended in the philosophical literature on the metaphysics of mind e.g. Dualism, Identity Theory, and Functionalism.

Useful background Reading

Tim Crane The Elements of Mind, (OUP 2001, ch.2)


Week 2: Nonreductive Physicalism

Non-reductive physicalists defend the token (as opposed to type) identity of the mental
and the physical. Token identity is normally analysed in terms of supervenience. We will introduce the position and explore some of the arguments that have been given in support of it.

**Class reading**

Louise Anthony, “Everybody has got it: a defence of non-reductive materialism.” CDPM.

**Optional Reading**

Paul Churchland, “The Evolving Fortunes of Eliminative Materialism.” CDPM


Terrence Horgan and James Woodward (1985) Folk Psychology is here to stay. *Philosophical Review, 94,* 197 – 226

**Weeks 3 & 4: Mental Causation**

One of the main problems for the nonreductive physicalist is making room for the possibility of mental causation. Jaegwon Kim has developed persuasive arguments that nonreductive physicalism risks collapse into epiphenomenalism, the view that the mental lacks causal efficacy. We’ll explore Kim’s argument and some possible responses.

**Class Readings:**

Week 3 - Jaegwon Kim “Causation and Mental Causation.” CDPM

Week 4 - Barry Loewer “Mental Causation, or Something Near Enough.” CDPM

**Optional Reading**


**Week 5: Varieties of Functionalism**

We can find structure and organisation in reality at many distinct levels of complexity. Functionalists argue that mental states and processes can be identified with higher-
order causal properties. In this seminar we will explore some of the varieties of functionalism that have been proposed, and some objections that have been leveled against functionalism, focusing in particular on Ned Block’s classic paper.

**Class Readings:**

William Lycan “The Continuity of Levels of Nature.”


Ned Block “Troubles with Functionalism”

Both can be found as ch.’s 5 & 7 in Lycan & Prinz (Ed.’s) *Mind and Cognition: an Anthology.* (3d Edition, Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies, 2008). The version of the Block paper is abridged. If you have time you might look to read the full version which can be found at:

http://w3.uniroma1.it/cordeschi/Articoli/block.htm

**Optional reading**


**Week 6 The Extended Mind**

Clark and Chalmers have famously argued that cognitive and mental processes can include as proper parts, elements that are located in an organism’s external environment. We will show how their argument for extended cognition is based on a particular version of functionalism, and outline and assess a recent argument Mark Sprevak has made that the extended mind may constitute a reductio of functionalism.

**Class readings**


**Optional reading**


Week 7 Kripke’s Argument against the Identity Theory

In *Naming and Necessity* (1980) Kripke proposed a conceivability argument against the mind-body identity theory. If a brain-state such as C-fibre stimulation is identical with a phenomenal state such as pain, then they are necessarily identical. But it seems contingent that those two states should be identical, and since that appearance of contingency cannot be explained away, it is a real contingency. It follows that no such phenomenal state is identical with any physical state of the brain. In this session we will examine Kripke’s argument, focusing on some of its premises from his philosophy of language.

**Class reading**


**Optional reading**

J. Kallestrup, ‘Three Strands in Kripke’s Argument against the Identity Theory’, Philosophy Compass 3, 2008, 1255-1280

Week 8 Chalmers’ Zombie Argument

Chalmers is well known for his defense of the use of conceivability arguments to argue against physicalism, and for the possibility of zombie worlds. (“Philosophical zombies” are creatures that are physically identical to us but completely unconscious). In this session we will take a close look at the relationship between conceivability and possibility, and Chalmers’ argument that we can infer possibility from conceivability. Such an argumentative move has played a key role in the history of philosophy in arguments for dualism. In response, some physicalists resist that move, while others reject that zombie worlds are genuinely conceivable.

**Class Reading**


Week 9 Jackson’s Knowledge Argument

Jackson (1986) proposed a famous thought experiment, which was supposed to challenge the physicalist claim that all the facts are necessitated by the physical facts. Imagine that Mary is a super-scientist who learns all the physical facts about color vision in a black-and-white room containing black-and-white computers, books, etc. If
physicalism is true, Mary thereby learns all the facts about color vision. One day she is released by her capturers. She steps into the world of ripe tomatoes and green golf courses. As intuition has it that she learns a new fact about what it’s like to see red and green, physicalism is false. This session is devoted to Jackson’s argument and a couple of the most popular responses.

Class Reading


Optional Reading


Week 10  Consciousness and the Brain

Is there a single kind of consciousness or does consciousness fragment into different kinds? Ned Block has for some time been arguing for a distinction between phenomenal and access consciousness. Recently he has adduced very interesting data from neuroscience and psychology in support of this distinction. We will explore some of his arguments for distinguishing access from phenomenal consciousness. We will also see how his arguments could be used to support a physicalist account of consciousness.

Class Reading:


Optional Reading


http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/courses/consciousness/papers/Burge_Reflections.pdf

Any of the commentaries on the Block paper!!

Week 11  Personal Identity

What makes you the same person over time? This is the question that underlies the metaphysical problem of personal identity, and philosophers have brought to bear very sophisticated accounts of the metaphysics of identity in delivering an answer to this question. In this session we will explore that debate between perdurantist and endurantist accounts of identity and consider their implications for our understanding of persons.
Class Reading


Optional reading


7. Assessment Information

This course is assessed by two essays.

1st Essay (1,500 words) 40%; due on Thursday 28th of February, by 4pm

2nd Essay (2,000 words) 60%; due on Thursday 25th of April, by 4pm

Essay Questions

Essay one:

Is it the case, as stated by Block (1978), that ‘functionalism is guilty of liberalism’?

Critically analyse Kim’s overdetermination argument against non-reductive materialism.

Essay two:

Does the extended mind hypothesis constitute a reductio of functionalism?

How can the seeming contingency that pain is C-fibre stimulation be explained away?

How might one argue that Zombies are conceivable but not possible?

Does the ability hypothesis satisfactorily answer the knowledge argument?
Can phenomenal consciousness go beyond cognitive accessibility?

**Notes on referencing for an essay**

A clear referencing system is essential for any good essay. As this is a relatively easy thing to achieve, there should be no excuse for poor referencing.

**Quotations**

Quotations must be accompanied by the author, date and page number. E.g.

‘Mirror neuron activation can easily be interpreted as part of the neuronal processes that underlie social perception.’ (Gallagher, 2008a, p. 541)

Some of the articles we use are pre-prints. When possible, use the page number from the actual publication (if this is a journal article, then you can find it online). If this is not possible, then write ‘quote’ (forthcoming) or ‘quote’ (on-line source).

**Bibliography**

References should be in alphabetical order by author, and, if there is more than one entry for an author, in date order for that author (using 'a', 'b' etc, if there is more than a single reference for that author in a given year). Below are some examples of different types of reference.


Please note: do not use the format of the course readings as your template for the bibliography, as I’ve collated them from different sources so they are not uniform. In other words, do as I say, and not as I do...
Word Count Penalties
Essays must not exceed the word limit, which includes footnotes but excludes bibliography. The precise word count must be written on the coversheet. Overlong essays will be penalised according to the following rule: 5% will be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, over the word limit. So, 1-100 words over lose 5%; 101-200 words over lose 10%; 201-300 words over lose 15%; and so on.

Penalties for Late Submission of Essays
Essays submitted late without an extension may not be marked, but, if marked, will incur a penalty (in accordance with section 3.8 of the University Undergraduate Assessment Regulations at: http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Regulations/UG_AssessmentRegulations.PDF
For each working day that the work is late there will be a reduction of the mark by 5% of the maximum obtainable mark (e.g. a mark of 65% on the common marking scale would be reduced to 60% up to 24 hours later). This penalty applies for up to five working days, after which a mark of zero will be given.

8. Learn
This year we will be piloting electronic submissions for all Honours coursework. For essay submission instructions please see the instructions on LEARN. Please note you should not include your name or matriculation number on coursework, only your exam number.

9. Useful Information

WEEK 6 INNOVATIVE LEARNING WEEK (18 - 22 February 2013). Normal teaching slots will be suspended and in their place will be a range of other activities such as master classes, a research day, a science fair, and guest Seminars. More information will follow nearer the time so please check the School website where details will be available on the PPLS Events page: http://www.ppls.ed.ac.uk/events/view/innovative-learning-week-18-22-february-2013

Office Hours
My office hours are Monday, 2-3pm & Wednesday 2-3pm. Office hours are a good time for you to come and discuss ideas for your essays. Please don’t think you need a ‘problem’ to come to office hours; I am always willing to use this time to chat through any thoughts you may be having about topics covered in the course, or topics for your essays.
10. Common Marking Scheme

http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| A1    | 90-100 | Excellent  
*Outstanding in every respect, the work is well beyond the level expected of a competent student at their level of study.* |
| A2    | 80-89  | Excellent  
*Outstanding in some respects, the work is often beyond what is expected of a competent student at their level of study.* |
| A3    | 70-79  | Excellent  
*Very good or excellent in most respects, the work is what might be expected of a very competent student.* |
| B     | 60-69  | Very Good  
*Good or very good in most respects, the work displays thorough mastery of the relevant learning outcomes.* |
| C     | 50-59  | Good       
*The work clearly meets requirements for demonstrating the relevant learning outcomes.* |
| D     | 40-49  | Pass       
*The work meets minimum requirements for demonstrating the relevant learning outcomes.* |
| E     | 30-39  | Marginal fail  
*The work fails to meet minimum requirements for demonstrating the relevant learning outcomes.* |
| F     | 20-29  | Clear fail  
*The work is very weak or shows a decided lack of effort.* |
| G     | 10-19  | Bad fail    
*The work is extremely weak.* |
| H     | 0-9    | Bad fail    
*The work is of very little consequence, if any, to the area in question.* |

Grade-related Marking Guidelines

**Explaining the function of these guidelines:**

(1) These are only guidelines; marking still requires discretion and judgment.

(2) The guidelines are “bottom up” — each band presupposes that the student has at least satisfied the criteria laid down under the lower bands. So to get a first, it
is assumed that you at least satisfy all the criteria for a 2-1, etc.

(3) Each set of guidelines should be understood not as providing necessary and sufficient conditions for a mark in the band specified. Rather, the guidelines under each band provide a kind of "cluster" which defines a paradigm of a piece of work falling within the band in question. A piece of work might deviate from the paradigm in certain respects but still fall within the band. It might help to explain the idea of a paradigm being invoked here. By way of comparison, an ornamental chair (as one might find in a museum, and that is not fit for sitting on) is a less paradigmatic instance of a piece of furniture than an ordinary sofa, but plausibly an ornamental chair still counts as a piece of furniture all the same. This is because it satisfies enough of the criteria in the cluster of concepts associated with being a piece of furniture, though it satisfies fewer of those criteria than an ordinary sofa. Similarly, a piece of work might be a less than fully paradigmatic instance of a 2-1 but still count as a 2-1 all the same.

(4) Although they are written in a way that might naturally suggest a binary reading, the guidelines are generally scalar – satisfying each of them comes in degrees, and is not all or nothing. This is important, and relevant to the "paradigm" point above, in that doing better with respect to one criteria under a given band could offset doing slightly less well with regards to another. Also, precisely where within the band a piece of work is assessed will typically reflect how well the work does in terms of each of these criteria.

(5) The guidelines apply most clearly for essays. In the case of exam questions, part of the exercise will be for the student to work out the extent to which the question calls for something going beyond pure exegesis.

(6) For history of philosophy classes, where the instructor explicitly indicates this is the case, the contrast between exegesis and original argument may be less clear. In these cases, the original argumentation may be an original argument for an interpretation or reading of a text, for example. Individual instructors have some discretion in explaining how the specific details of their course mean these guidelines should be interpreted. As mere guidelines, they provide only a sort of “default setting” rather than a one size fits all set of prescriptions, amenable to only one canonical interpretation.

General Guidelines

- Clarity:
  - Is the writing clear?
  - Is the grammar and spelling correct?
  - Is the language used appropriate?

- Structure:
  - Is a clear thesis or position stated?
  - Is an argument, or arguments, offered in support of the thesis?
  - Does each part of the essay/exam have a clearly indicated purpose?

- Understanding:
  - Is a sound understanding of relevant issues demonstrated?
- Is the exposition of others’ views accurate?
- Are technical terms adequately defined?

**Originality:**
- Is there evidence of independent thought?
- Is there critical engagement with the material?

**Argument:**
- Is the argument convincing?
- Are the inferences valid?
- Are obvious objections anticipated?

**Grade Bands**

**Fail (less than 40)**

**Third Class (40–49):**

- Writing is generally unclear. Frequent spelling or grammar mistakes, incorrect language, and/or excessively convoluted sentence structure.
- Neglects clearly to state a thesis or position and/or fails to support this with arguments. Contains irrelevant material, or material whose relevance is not adequately explained.
- Demonstrates a barely adequate understanding of central issues. Contains several errors in exposition or in explanation of concepts.
- No evidence of independent thought or critical engagement. Merely rehashes arguments from readings or lectures.
- Where arguments are given, these are weak, depend on invalid inferences or implausible premises. Fails to anticipate obvious objections.

**Lower Second Class (50–59):**

- Writing is generally clear, but there are occasional spelling/grammar infelicities and/or poorly constructed sentences.
- A thesis/position is indicated but not clearly defined. Some arguments given, but their structure often unclear.
- Demonstrates a basic grasp of key concepts, but occasional inaccuracies in exposition/explanation.
- Little evidence of independent thought. Some suggestion of original ideas, but these are under-developed and/or expressed unclearly.
- Arguments generally weak or unconvincing.

**Upper Second Class (60–69):**

- Writing is generally clear, marred only by the rare spelling/grammar infelicity or poorly constructed sentence.
- A thesis/position is indicated and clearly defined. Arguments are given with relatively clear structure. It is generally clear what is going on in each section, why one section follows on from the previous one, and how the essay as a whole hangs together.
• Demonstrates a solid understanding of the key concepts, and the exposition is generally accurate and thorough.
• Substantial evidence of original thought – either an original argument of some kind for a familiar position or an original argument for a novel position. In either case, the argument should be reasonably well developed.
• The author’s original arguments are interesting and promising, but fairly central or glaring problems with the argument are not discussed or addressed in any way, or are given only a highly cursory treatment.

Low First Class (70–79):

• Writing is very clear and engaging throughout. Where examples are used they are both relevant and memorable. The writing will also be concise.
• The essay’s structure is not only clear and well defined; it also provides a satisfying narrative arc.
• Demonstrates a deep understanding of the key concepts. Explains other philosopher’s ideas in the author’s own terms, clearly presenting those ideas in a way that indicates that the author has “made them his/her own.” Where technical terms are used they are always carefully defined.
• Highly original thought, with well developed arguments. The exegesis will generally be sufficiently concise as to allow the author to develop his or her own arguments in considerable detail.
• The author very carefully considers the most central and obvious problems with his/her original argument(s) and has interesting things to say about them.

Mid-First Class (80–89):

• Writing is crystal clear and highly engaging throughout. Memorable examples are used to underscore key points. The writing is concise without coming across as terse or stilted.
• The essay’s structure is clear and well defined, with a highly satisfying narrative arc.
• Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts. Not only explains the ideas of other philosophers in a way that shows he/she has “made them his/her own,” but that actually casts new light on how we might charitably understand the ideas of those philosophers.
• Very original thought, above and beyond what we would normally expect from an undergraduate. These original ideas will be developed in great detail.
• The author very carefully considers the most central and obvious problems with his/her original argument(s) and has prima facie convincing rejoinders. Author may also consider more subtle objections to his/her argument(s)/view(s).

High First Class (90–100):

• Writing is extremely clear, concise, and engaging — of a publishable quality.
• The essay’s structure is extremely clear and well-defined, with a highly satisfying narrative arc.
• Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts. Not only explains the ideas
of other philosophers in a way that shows he/she has “made them his/her own,” but that actually casts new light on how we might charitably understand the ideas of those philosophers.

- A highly original and well developed line of argument and/or novel view, such that the essay is publishable, at least in an undergraduate or postgraduate journal, perhaps bordering on being publishable in a mainstream professional journal.

- The author considers the most important objections to his/her arguments/views. The replies are generally convincing and subtle. If space allows, less obvious objections may also be discussed in interesting ways.