

Essay Questions: Philosophical Issues in Behavioural Science

Bespoke Questions We encourage you to devise your own question through discussion with s.butterfill@warwick.ac.uk, or to adapt one of the questions below to your interests. Your question must then be added to this list and formally approved. However you may also use one of the questions below if you wish.

Lecture Materials Each question draws on specific sections of the lecture material, which also provide sources for reading. You do not have to use the lecture material but your essay will probably be marked down if it could have been improved by making better use of the lecture material. In any case, it may be prudent for you to ensure that you understand the sections relevant to your chosen question before answering it.

Glossary The lecture materials include a glossary to facilitate communication between us. You may deviate from the glossary providing you explicate your terms and providing you have good reason for doing so.

Difficulty Level Some questions are harder than others. In general, you should pick a harder one if you are aiming for a very high mark.

Support Planning The final seminar for this course will provide you with an opportunity to discuss your plans and, if things go well, to gather suggestions for reading specific to your plan.

Marking Criteria This course uses the standard philosophy marking criteria. Ideally your essay will demonstrate an awareness of a philosophical issue in behavioural science. We are aware that students taking this course may come from a variety of disciplines. Your essay can be written in the style of an essay from any of the disciplines covered on this course.

Part I: The Mark of Action

Questions

Are any human actions consequences of two (or more) dissociable processes? If so, what (if any) are the consequences for philosophical theories of action?¹

Are any human actions consequences of two (or more) dissociable processes? If so, what are the consequences for decision theory?

Are there any good reasons to reject the claim that human actions are consequences of two (or more) dissociable processes, one habitual another instrumental?²

Hint: If answering any of the above questions, be sure you understand what habitual processes are, and what goal-directed processes are.

How, if at all, should a philosophical theory of action incorporate scientific discoveries about the control of action?

Could some motor representations be intentions?

What is an interface problem? Consider one case in which an interface problem arises. How could the problem be solved?

Are there really interface problems? (Consider one case in which an interface problem supposedly arises and show that there isn't actually a problem.³)

Sources

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¹You may take the first of these questions only as your title. Please be aware that this is a particularly difficult option. You should not normally do this unless you have approval from your seminar tutor.

²No such reasons are discussed in the lecture materials because I am not yet aware of any. This question is included because you may have some insight that I have missed.

³No such cases are discussed in the lecture materials because I am not yet aware of any.

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Sources: Motor Representation

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Sources: Interface Problems

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Part II: Acting Together

What distinguishes joint actions from merely individual actions performed in parallel?

Which psychological structures enable agents to coordinate their plans? What if anything do these mechanisms reveal about how acting together differs from acting in parallel but merely individually?

How, if at all, should a philosophical theory of acting together incorporate scientific discoveries about the interpersonal coordination of action?

What is team reasoning? Why, if at all, must an account of acting together invoke team reasoning?

Can cooperation be characterised in game-theoretic terms?

Sources

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Sources: Joint Commitment

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Sources: Game Theory

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Sinervo, B. and Lively, C. M. (1996). The rock–paper–scissors game and the evolution of alternative male strategies. *Nature*, 380(6571):240–243.

Sources: Cooperation (and Team Reasoning)

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