

Essay Questions for Joint Action (PH359)

In the early stages of writing essay you should discuss what to read with the lecturer. You should also discuss an outline of your essay, and possibly a draft, both with peers and with the lecturer.

Mid-term essay (15%)

The limit is 1500 words. Shorter is better, all other things being equal.

You may only answer questions from this list. If you wish to formulate your own question, discuss it with the lecturer and ask him to add it to this list.

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

Critically assess either Bratman's, Searle's, or Gilbert's, account of shared agency. What are its aims? What are the major objections to it? Does the account succeed? (You should focus on a single account of shared agency.)

Does the existence of joint action entail that there are mental states with plural subjects?

What kinds of commitment, if any, are necessarily involved in performing joint actions?

How could the fact that you are performing a joint action rather than merely acting in parallel with someone else affect your experience or knowledge of action?

How does Gilbert attempt to show that joint commitments exist? Does she succeed?

Bratman's sufficient conditions for shared intention include a requirement on common knowledge. If his conditions are sufficient, would they also be sufficient minus the requirement on common knowledge?

What are aggregate subjects? Are there any such things?

Bratman's sufficient conditions for shared intention include a requirement on persistence interdependence. If his conditions are sufficient, would they also be sufficient minus the requirement on persistence interdependence?

What is the settle condition? Why is it apparently a problem for Bratman's account of shared intention? Can Bratman's account overcome the problem?

Assessed essay (85%)

The limit is 2500 words. Shorter is better, all other things being equal.

You are encouraged to formulate your own question and discuss it with the lecturer, who may choose to add it to this list. You may only answer questions from this list.

How must accounts of individual agency be revised or extended to accommodate shared agency?

How, if at all, can we make sense of the idea that states like knowledge or intention can be shared by two or more subjects?

Must an account of shared agency invoke contralateral, or joint, commitments?

When does shared agency first appear in human development? What role might it play in facilitating development?

What are joint commitments? Are they irreducibly collective?

Must an account of shared intention invoke commitment?

Do capacities for joint action make available routes to knowledge that are unavailable to individuals incapable of joint action?

Evaluate one or more attempts to provide a theory of joint action by appeal to team reasoning.

Can appeal to aggregate subjects explain joint actions involving large groups?

Which psychological structures enable us to coordinate our actions or plans, and what if anything do these mechanisms tell us about the nature of shared agency? (Your answer may draw on research on task co-representation or research on motor processes. You are not required to cover both kinds of research but may do so.)

Is talk of group agency ineliminable?

Is group belief a matter of being jointly committed to believing as a body?