after:hours Centre for Languages, Culture and Communication

**Course Descriptor**

**Course Title:** Philosophy for Psychotherapists

**Type of Course:** Adult Education

**Credit:** Not credit bearing

**Weekly Session Titles and Descriptions**

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| Week | Session Title | Description |
| 1 | Introduction: What is philosophy? | The nature of philosophical inquiry. How philosophy differs from empirical psychology and other human sciences. Points of contact between philosophical inquiry and psychotherapy. |
| 2 | The ‘two-world view’ of the mind. | Descartes’ dualism of mind and body. The problem of causal interaction between mind and body. The problem of scepticism about the external world and/or other minds. Implications for psychotherapists of adopting a dualistic conception of the mind. |
| 3 | Phenomena and Noumena | Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution’ in philosophy. The idea of the unknowability of things as they are in themselves. Freud’s appropriation of this idea in terms of unconscious mental processes. |
| 4 | Ordinary human unhappiness. | Schopenhauer’s response to Kant. The idea of our double knowledge of the body as ‘will’ and ‘representation’. Schopenhauer’s appropriation of Eastern philosophy and Freud’s remark that the aim of psychoanalytic therapy is to transform neurotic misery into ordinary human unhappiness.   |
| 5 | Recognition | Hegel’s response to Kant. The shift in Hegel from an atomistic to a socially holistic conception of the mind, particularly in terms of the role of recognition from others in self-understanding. The influence of a broadly Hegel approach to understanding the mind in psychoanalysis after Freud.  |
| 6 | Justifying the concept of the unconscious | Freud’s distinction between the ‘descriptive’ and the ‘dynamic’ unconscious and problems with the logic of classical psychoanalytic explanation. The extent to which Freud understands the mind in Cartesian (dualistic) terms. |
| 7 | The ghost in the machine. | Gilbert Ryle’s critique of the two-world view of the mind. His arguments to show that talk of things going on in the mind can only be talk of our worldly activities. Implications for the way we think about mental processes as psychotherapists, drawing on the work of the Boston Process of Change Study Group. Behaviourist critiques of classical psychoanalytic explanation. |
| 8 | Philosophy as therapy (or ‘meaning is use’) | Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophical problems as symptoms of a kind of intellectual illness. His treatment of philosophical problems in terms of our actual use of language. Parallels between Ryle’s critique of the two-world view of the mind and Wittgenstein’s remarks on the (im)possibility of a private language. Implications for our understanding of the role of language in psychotherapy.   |
| 9 | Being-in-the-world | Heidegger’s existential phenomenology. His objections to Freud’s theories and the reception of his ideas in psychiatry and psychotherapy. Implications for our understanding of the therapeutic relationship, particularly in terms of the most basic features of human existence, such as being-with-others and being-towards-death. The tradition of existential therapy (Medard Boss, Yalom, etc.). |
| 10 | The Self | The shift in relational psychotherapy from models of insight to models of authenticity in the therapeutic relationship as the agent of therapeutic change. Differences between ‘ego’ and self. Arguments in philosophy for and against the existence of the self. Winnicott’s theory of the false self in relation to the concept of authenticity in existential phenomenology. |

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| Course OverviewVery often the questions we ask ourselves as psychotherapists are essentially philosophical ones, concerning the nature of the mind, the relationship between mind and body, the relationship between thought and language, the nature of the self, the possibility of knowing another human being, and so on.On this course we invite you to explore philosophical questions of relevance to psychotherapists.The aim of this course is not just to find out what various philosophers have written and said on various topics, but to engage in the activity of philosophical inquiry in the belief that this can enrich our understanding and discussion of our work as psychotherapists.The course is aimed at practising psychotherapists or those in training to become psychotherapists, and is geared towards enriching the range of intellectual tools at your disposal to assess the theory and practice of psychotherapy. Philosophy is a skill, not a body of knowledge, and this will be reflected in how this course is taught. You will be encouraged to participate in classroom discussion and develop your ability to express and critically assess opinions on philosophical topics. The course is taught in person and you will be asked to participate in group discussion and other activities during the sessions. Questions and discussions at the sessions will be very much encouraged and welcomed.Required Previous Experience (if any)No previous experience of philosophy is necessary, but you should have some background in psychotherapy.Required Reading Material or Special Equipment Needed (if any)* None specified

Learning Outcomes At the end of this course you should be able to* Understand some key concepts in philosophy and their potential connection to concepts in psychotherapy
* Understand aspects of philosophy that might be useful in the context of psychotherapy practice
* Engage in discussion with others on the relationship between philosophy and psychotherapy and the potential use of philosophical concepts in psychotherapy.
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# Possible Further Study

Further courses on the after:hours programme in philosophy or psychotherapy might be useful to you.

# Additional information

This course descriptor may be subject to change during the delivery of the course, depending on the specific direction and nature of the learner cohort, and is intended to be responsive to the group dynamics as they emerge during the delivery of the course.