
This summer there will take place at the University of Hamburg, on July 15–17, a reading seminar on the topic ‘Agency Past and Future’. The seminar is aimed at graduate students and early career researchers in philosophy, and will focus on questions of agency and freedom, of temporal asymmetry, and their connections. The seminar will be spread over three days during which we will look at some key historical and contemporary texts addressing these themes. The plan for discussion is:

Day 1: The logic of future contingents in Aristotle and Ockham. Discussion led by Calvin Normore (UCLA) and Magali Roques (Hamburg).
Day 2: Decision, freedom, and reasoning about the future. Discussion led by Alison Fernandes (Trinity College Dublin).
Day 3: Grounding and the open future. Discussion led by Roberto Loss (Hamburg).

The reading seminar will be followed by the conference, ‘Agency, Past and Future’, July 18–20, also at the University of Hamburg. See below for abstract and speaker list:

Agency, Past and Future (conference)

We feel that there is a fundamental difference between the past and the future. The past seems to us fixed and settled, whereas the future is open and up for grabs. This sense of an asymmetry grips us most strongly in our capacity as agents: we think of ourselves as capable of settling how things go in the future, whereas the past is something we have to come to terms with and accept. How should we understand this phenomenon? Is there an absolute metaphysical difference between the past and future, or is any apparent difference rather a product of our perspective as agents? How, if at all, does our sense of the difference between past and future relate to the directionality of causation, and to our status as causal beings? And how does this asymmetry structure practical rationality and deliberation? This conference aims to bring together a variety of approaches to these questions, uniting common themes from the history of philosophy, the philosophy of time and causation, and the philosophy of action.

Speaker list:

Simona Aimar (UCL)
Julian Bacharach (UCL)
Alison Fernandes (Trinity College Dublin)
Florian Fischer (Bonn/Siegen)
Jennifer Hornsby (Birkbeck)
Julia Jorati (Ohio)
Roberto Loss (Hamburg)
Erasmus Mayr (Nürnberg-Erlagen)
Anne-Sophie Meincke (Exeter)
D. H. Mellor (Cambridge)
Calvin Normore (UCLA)
L. A. Paul (Yale)
Thomas Pink (King’s College London)
Sebastian Rödl (Leipzig)
Registration for both the seminar and conference is free, although regrettably we are unable to cover participants’ travel and accommodation expenses. A list of affordable hotels near the venue and more information on the summer school will be posted on the website: https://s-p-o-t.weebly.com/agency-past-and-future.html

To register for the seminar, please send a letter of motivation and a CV to all of julian.bacharach@gmail.com, magali.roques@gmail.com, and Fischer Florian.Fischer@uni-siegen.de.

Organised by Magali Roques (Hamburg), Florian Fischer (Bonn/Siegen), and Julian Bacharach (UCL).

The seminar and conference are organised by the Society for the Philosophy of Time (https://s-p-o-t.weebly.com/), and generously supported by a grant from the Fritz-Thyssen Stiftung.

Julian/Magali/Florian.