

Metaphysics: Freedom and Time (Senior Sophister)

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Office hours: Arts 5005
Tuesday 2:00pm–4:00pm

PI4042/PI4142 (5/10 ECTS)
Thursday 2:00pm–4:00pm
Arts 5012
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In this module, we'll explore metaphysical questions relating to freedom and time. Are we free if scientific laws determine what we do? Why do we control the future and not the past? Do metaphysical views about time explain the openness of the future—or should asymmetries of time and control be explained in scientific terms? We'll examine the work of a number of contemporary philosophers who use the challenge of reconciling science with metaphysics to develop new ideas about time, agency and the relations between them. Authors and topics to be considered include Jenann Ismael on how 'epistemic freedom' explains the apparent openness of the future, Huw Price on how causation depends on the perspective of agents, and Craig Callender on using psychology to explain the specialness of the present. Through exploring this work, students will develop their own views about time, freedom, and agency, as well as the role of science in philosophical theorising.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Explain metaphysical accounts of time and freedom, and assess their compatibility with contemporary science.
- Discuss and critically evaluate recent revisionist conceptions of time, freedom and their relation.
- Argue for their own views about how to reconcile our experience of time and freedom with a scientific view of the world.
- Express their views about the role of science and experience in philosophy.

Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to prepare work in advance, by reading the relevant material, preparing questions or points to discuss in class, and posting on the class discussion board as requested. Required readings are available on blackboard. Students are expected to take an active role in class by listening, asking questions and responding constructively to each other, as well as by participating in class activities.

Course Requirements

Assessment for 10 ECTS:
2 x seminar papers (60%)
2 hour examination (40%)

Assessment for 5 ECTS:
Seminar paper (60%)
1 hour examination (40%)

Seminar papers are to be on topics of your choice. Papers are a maximum of 2500 words and are due Fri 30th Nov for all, and also Mon 29th Oct for 10ECTS students. You will need to submit an outline of each paper two weeks prior (Mon 15th Oct; Fri 16th Nov). Failure to do so will result in a 5% penalty on the paper mark.

For the examination, those completing 5 ECTS will answer 1 essay question (of 3) in 1 hour; those completing 10 ECTS will answer 2 essay questions (of 6) in two hours.

Papers will be graded using the following classifications:

I 70–100

II.1 60–69

II.2 50–59

III 40–49

F1 30–39

F2 0–29

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance in class is essential to getting the most out of the course. If you are unable to attend more than one session, please get in touch with me to ensure you are able to keep up with class work, and do not miss out on important information.

Lateness: Late work will be penalised, as per departmental policy, unless an extension is granted. Please contact your tutor to request an extension. Up to one week late receives a 5% penalty (of total possible mark), with 5% taken off per additional week. Please also speak to me if you have general concerns about your ability to submit work on time.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is interpreted by the University as the act of presenting the work of others as one's own work without acknowledgement, and as such, is considered to be academically fraudulent. The University considers plagiarism to be a major offence and it is subject to the disciplinary procedures of the University. It is the responsibility of the author of any work to ensure that he/she does not commit plagiarism.

Plagiarism can arise from actions such as:

- (a) copying another student's work;
- (b) enlisting another person or persons to complete an assignment on the student's behalf;
- (c) procuring, whether with payment or otherwise, the work or ideas of another;
- (d) quoting directly, without acknowledgement, from books, articles or other sources, either in printed, recorded or electronic format, including websites and social media;
- (e) paraphrasing, without acknowledgement, the writings of other authors.

A general set of guidelines for students on avoiding plagiarism is available on <http://tcd.ie.libguides.com/plagiarism>. For further details, see the Philosophy Information Booklet 2018–2019.

Accessibility

Every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating learning experience. Students are encouraged to talk with me during office hours about their learning styles and modes of comprehension. Students with disabilities, medical or mental health issues are particularly encouraged to consult with me at their earliest convenience about how the course and assessment can be structured to provide a fair and enriching learning environment. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, please speak to me as well as contact Trinity Disability Service (<https://www.tcd.ie/disability/> Room 2054, Arts Building) at +353 1 896 3111 or askds@tcd.ie. Trinity's Student Counselling Service can be reached at student-counselling@tcd.ie, https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/, +353 1896 1407 or by calling at the 3rd floor of 7–9 South Leinster Street.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (13 Sep): Introduction, Metaphysics of Time

Topics: How do we know about freedom and time? Does time pass? Does it have a direction? Are the past, present and future all equally real? A and B theories of time; arguments from science and experience

- Readings:* 1. Zimmerman, Dean W. 2008. 'The Privileged Present: Defending an "A-Theory" of Time'. In *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*.
2. Williams, Donald C. 1951. 'The Myth of Passage' *The Journal of Philosophy*. 48(15): 457–472.

Week 2 (20 Sep): Fatalism, Freedom, and Determinism

What is the fatalist argument against us being free? How should we respond to it? Are we free if laws and causes determine what we do? Arguments for compatibilism and incompatibilism including the consequence argument

1. van Inwagen, Peter. 2008. 'The Powers of Rational Beings'. In *Metaphysics*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press; 3rd edition.
2. Vihvelin, Kadri. 2008. Compatibilism, Incompatibilism and Impossibilism. In *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*.

Week 3 (27 Sep): Time Travel

Can we travel back in time? Can we change the past? Would time travel constrain our ability to control the future? Does time travel give us extra ways to control the future?

- Silverberg, Robert. 1956. *Absolutely Inflexible*. Reprinted in Michael Rea (ed.) *Arguing About Metaphysics*. 2009. New York: Routledge.
- Casati, Roberto and Varzi, Achille. 2001. 'That Useless Time Machine'. *Philosophy* 76: 581–3.
1. Lewis, David. 1976. 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel'. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13(2): 145–152.
 2. Rennick, Stephanie. 2015. 'Things mere mortals can do, but philosophers can't'. *Analysis* 75(1): 22–26.

Week 4 (4 Oct—to be rescheduled): Mental Causation

Do our beliefs and desires cause physical events? Must our beliefs and desires be physical in order to cause physical events? Does lower-level causation crowd out higher-level causation? The problem of 'causal exclusion' for dualism and non-reductivism about the mental

1. Carroll, John W. and Markosian, Ned, 2010. 'Mental States'. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 6. [focus on causal exclusion]

Week 5 (11 Oct): Causation in Physics; Temporal Asymmetry

Is there causation in physics? Do we need causes in addition to laws? Why do causes come before their effects? Russell's Challenge to causation and Cartwright's response

1. Russell, Bertrand. 1912–13. On the Notion of Cause. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series* 13: 1–26. [focus on pp. 1, 9–15]
- Hitchcock, Christopher. 2008. ‘What Russell Got Right’ in *Causation, physics, and the constitution of reality*. [optional, but use this if you find the Russell hard-going]
2. Cartwright, Nancy. 1979. ‘Causal Laws and Effective Strategy’ *Noûs* 13(4): 419–37. [only read pp. 419–20; 429–430]

Week 6 (18 Oct): Counterfactual Accounts of Causation

Can causation be analysed using counterfactuals? Where does the temporal asymmetry of causation come from? Are we free in the way counterfactual accounts suggest? Lewis’ counterfactual account of causation; related statistical-mechanical accounts

1. Lewis, David. 1979. ‘Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow’. *Noûs* 13(4): 455–476.
2. Albert, David. 2000. ‘The Asymmetries of Knowledge and Intervention’. In *Time and Chance*. Ch. 6 §2.

Outline for first paper (for 10 ECTS) due Monday 15th October.

Week 7: Reading Week

First paper (for 10 ECTS) due Monday 29th October.

Week 8 (1 Nov): Causation as Intervention and Difference-Making

How might causation be related to ideas about intervening, or making a difference in the world? Can such an account explain our *freedom* to intervene in the world? Non-reductive interventionist accounts of causation; causal modelling

1. Pearl, Judea. 2000 *Causality: Models, Reasoning and Inference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Epilogue. [focus pp. 343–352]
2. List, Christian and Menzies, Peter. 2017. ‘My brain made me do it: The exclusion argument against free will, and what’s wrong with it’. In *Making a Difference*.

Week 9 (8 Nov): The Agent’s Perspective

Can we use our decisions as evidence of the past? Does causation depend on us taking up the deliberator’s perspective? How might asymmetries of agents produce the temporal asymmetry of causation? Agency and perspectivalist accounts of causation

1. Price, Huw. 2007. Causal Perspectivalism. In *Causation, Physics, and the Constitution of Reality*. ed. Huw Price and Richard Corry. *Oxford*: Oxford University Press. 250–292. [long]

Week 10 (15 Nov): Epistemic Freedom and the Open Future

How does our ability to decide as we like contribute to our sense that the future is open? Can we predict our decisions before making them? How might epistemic features of decision-making explain our ability to decide freely?

- Taylor, Richard. 2009. ‘The Story of Osmo’. In *Arguing About Metaphysics*. 349–350.
- Chiang, Ted. 2005. ‘What’s Expected of Us’.
2. Goldman, Alvin I. 1976. *A theory of human action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch. 6. [focus on §s 1, 4, 6]

1. Ismael, Jenann. 2014. 'Decision and the Open Future'. In *The Future of the Philosophy of Time*. Adrian Bardon (ed.) London: Routledge. 149–68.

Week 11–12 (22 and 29 Nov): Time, Psychology and the Changing Present

What makes it seem to us that time flows and the present is special? What kind of creatures must we be to experience time as we do? How can psychology contribute to metaphysical questions about time?

1. Callender, Craig. 2017. 'The Flow of Time' In *What Makes Time Special*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 11.
2. Prosser, Simon. 2016. 'Moving Through Time, and the Open Future'. In *Experiencing Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 7.

Additional Readings

General background material can be found in:

- Carroll, John W. and Markosian, Ned, 2010. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garrett, Brian. 2017. *What is this thing called Metaphysics?* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ney, Alyssa. 2014. *Metaphysics: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Rea, Michael. (ed.) 2009. *Arguing About Metaphysics*. New York: Routledge.
- Sider, Theodore, Hawthorne, John and Zimmerman, Dean W. (eds.) 2008. *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Useful collections on **Time**:

- Callender, Craig. (ed.) 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dyke, Heather and Bardon, Adrian (eds.). *A Companion to the Philosophy of Time*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Price, Huw. 1996. *Time's Arrow and Archimedes' Point*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 12–17.
- Rovelli, Carlo. 2018. *The Order of Time*. Allen Lane.

Useful collections on **Causation**:

- Beebe, Helen, Hitchcock, Christopher and Price, Huw. 2017. *Making a Difference: Essays on the Philosophy of Causation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Collins, John, Hall, Ned and Paul, L. A. (eds.) *Causation and Counterfactuals*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Price, Huw and Corry, Richard. (eds.) 2007. *Causation, physics, and the constitution of reality: Russell's republic revisited*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

W1. Metaphysics of Time

- Miller, Kristie. 2013. Presentism, Eternalism, and the Growing Block. In Dyke and Bardon (eds.) Ney. 2014. Ch. 5.
- Carroll and Markosian. 2010. Ch. 7.
- Price 1996. pp. 12–17.
- Callender, Craig. 2017. *What Makes Time Special*. New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 1.

W2. Fatalism, Freedom, and Determinism

- Frankfurt, Harry. 1969. 'Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility'. *Journal of Philosophy* 66(23): 829–839.
- van Inwagen, Peter. 1975. 'The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism'. *Philosophical Studies*: 27(3): 185–199.
- Ney. 2014. Ch. 9.
- Carroll and Markosian. 2010. Ch. 3.
- Kane, Robert. 2008. 'Incompatibilism'. In *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne and Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.) Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1941. The Garden of Forking Paths.
- le Poidevin, Robin. 2013. Time and Freedom. In Dyke and Bardon (eds.) Ch. 31.
- Dennett, Daniel. 2015. *Elbow Room*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

W3. Time Travel

- Hanley, Richard. 2004. 'No End in Sight'. No End in Sight: Causal Loops in Philosophy, Physics and Fiction. *Synthese*, 141(1): 123–152.
- Ismael, Jenann. 2003. 'Closed Causal Loops and the Bilking Argument.' *Synthese*. 136(3): 305–320.
- Price 1996. pp. 170–4.
- Howich, Paul. 1987. *Asymmetries in Time*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press. Ch. 7.
- Dummett, Michael. 1964. 'Bringing about the Past'. *Philosophical Review* 73(3): 338–359.
- Smith, Nicholas J.J., 'Time Travel', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/time-travel/>.
- Wasserman, Ryan. 2017. *The Paradoxes of Time Travel*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wells, H. G. 1895. *The Time Machine*. (Ch. 1)

W4. Mental Causation

- Kim, Jaegwon. 1993. 'The Nonreductivist's Troubles with Mental Causation'. In *Mental Causation*, John Heil and Alfred Mele (eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 11.
- Kim, Jaegwon. 1998. *Mind in a Physical World: An Essay on the Mind-Body Problem and Mental Causation*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (esp. Chs. 2–3)
- Hornsby, Jennifer. 1993. Agency and Causal Explanation. In *Mental Causation*, John Heil and Alfred Mele (eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 10.

W5. Causation in Physics; Temporal Asymmetry

- Field, Hartry. (2003) 'Causation in a Physical World', in Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fernandes, Alison. 2018. 'Causation: Further Themes'. *Routledge Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://www.rep.routledge.com/>

W6. Counterfactual Theories of Causation

- Lewis, David. 1981. Are We Free to Break the Laws? *Theoria* 47(3): 113–121.
- Collins, John, Hall, Ned and Paul, L. A. 2004. 'Counterfactuals and Causation: History, Problems, and Prospects'. In *Causation and Counterfactuals*.
- Loewer, Barry. 2007. 'Counterfactuals and the Second Law'. In *Russell's Republic Revisited*.

W8. Causation as Intervention

- Woodward, James. 2007. 'Causation with a Human Face'. In *Causation, Physics and the Constitution of Reality*.
- Woodward, James, 2003. *Making things happen: a theory of causal explanation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chs. 1–3.
- Menzies, Peter. 2017. 'The Consequence Argument Disarmed: An Interventionist Perspective'. In *Making a Difference: Essays on the Philosophy of Causation*. [skim §§. 3.1–3.3, 6, 7]

W9. The Agent's Perspective

- Menzies, Peter and Price, Huw. 1993. 'Causation as a Secondary Quality' *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 44(2): 187–203.
- Price, Huw and Weslake, Brad. 2009. 'The Time-Asymmetry of Causation'. In Helen Beebe, Peter Menzies & Christopher Hitchcock (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Causation*. Oxford University Press.
- Ismael, Jenann. 2016. 'How do causes depend on us? The many faces of perspectivalism' *Synthese* 193(1): 245–267.

W10. Epistemic Freedom and the Open Future

- Velleman, J. David. 1989b. Epistemic Freedom. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 70: 73–97.
- Ismael, Jenann, 2016. *How physics makes us free*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chs. 2, 6.
- Dennett, Daniel C. 1984. *Elbow room: the varieties of free will worth wanting*. Oxford: Clarendon. Ch. 5.
- Dennett, Daniel C. 2003. *Freedom evolves*. London: A. Lane. Chs 2–3.

W11–12. Time, Personhood, Psychology

- Callender, Craig. 2017. 'The Problem of Time'. In *What Makes Time Special*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 1. [other chapters fun too]
- Deng, Natalja. 2013. 'Our Experience of Passage on the B-Theory' *Erkenntnis* 78(4) : 713–726.
- Paul, L. A. 2015. 'Experience and the Arrow'. In *Chance and Temporal Asymmetry*, Alastair Wilson (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Velleman, J. David. So It Goes. *The Amherst Lecture in Philosophy* 1: 1–23. <<http://www.amherstlecture.org/velleman2006/>>.