

Metaphysics of Free Will

Directors: Santiago Amaya (Uniandes), Manuel Vargas (UC San Diego)

Meetings

July 15-30

Mon-Fri 9:00am-12:30pm*

Salon Marta Traba

*except on 7/19 and 7/25

August 1-2

Mon-Fri 9:00am-12:30pm

Hotel Plazuela de San Agustín

The topic of this seminar is the metaphysical problem of free will. In brief, this is the problem of how and to what extent the causal structure of the world is compatible with the existence of human freedom, in so far as the latter is a necessary condition for moral responsibility. Even though this is one of the most traditional problems in Western philosophy, it is the subject of intense and fruitful discussion in the contemporary literature. The purpose of the seminar is to chart that discussion and discover new avenues for progress. The exploration will be led by prominent figures in the contemporary free will debate.

This is the first of 3 midyear seminars of the project LATAM Free Will, Agency, and Responsibility funded by the John Templeton Foundation with the support of Universidad de los Andes and University of California in San Diego.

Invited Instructors

Carolina Sartorio (Arizona)

Eddy Nahmias (Georgia State)

Daniel Speak (Loyola Marymount)

Dana Nelkin (UC San Diego)

Randolph Clark (Florida State)

Derk Pereboom (Cornell)

Kevin Timpe (Calvin)

Seminar guidelines

- Participation in this seminar is a full-time commitment. Once the seminar begins there will be little time to get any other work done. So, make sure you do not come to Bogotá with anytime-demanding responsibilities.
- All required readings and most of the optional ones should be done prior to July 15th. Again, you won't have time to catch up once sessions start.
- Attendance at all seminar sessions is mandatory. You are expected to participate actively in our discussions. Your contributions ought to be respectful and constructive. Participation is not about scoring points, but in fostering everyone's philosophical development.
- We do not expect that you will know everything. Voicing confusions, asking questions (even if these might seem unsophisticated or unformed), and clarifying issues is *strongly* encouraged.

- Seminar sessions are a core part but not the only part of this seminar. There will be plenty of activities occurring in the afternoon (some more formal, some more social) where your participation is expected too.
- Behave professionally at all times. Misconduct (including, but not restricted to abuse, harassment, discrimination) will not be tolerated. The seminars will be governed by the Universidad de los Andes graduate student handbook and the MAAD protocol. Both are available online.

Schedule & Readings

I. The metaphysical problem of free will (Carolina Sartorio)

In the first part, we will introduce the free will problem, the main concepts involved (free will, moral responsibility, determinism, indeterminism, etc.), and the main views on the problem (compatibilism, incompatibilism, libertarianism, etc.). We will then focus on a central argument for incompatibilism, the “consequence argument,” and the main reactions to it. One promising way to approach the free will problem is to look at the underlying debate between two ways of understanding free will: the classical model in terms of alternative possibilities (“leeway freedom”), on the one hand, and the more recent model in terms of actual sequences (“source freedom”), on the other. This debate will be the main focus of the second part. We will also discuss examples of actual-sequence views and potential avenues of future research.

July 15.

Required readings:

McKenna, M., & Pereboom, D. (2016). *Free Will: A Contemporary Introduction*. New York: Routledge. Introduction and chapters 1, 2, and 4 (skip sections 4.4 and 4.5)

Optional:

Lewis, D. (1981). Are We Free to Break the Laws. *Theoria*, 3, 113-121.

Slote, M. (1982) Selective Necessity and the Free-Will Problem. *Journal of Philosophy*, 79 (1), 5-24.

July 16.

Required readings:

Frankfurt, H. (1969). Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility. *Journal of Philosophy*, 66 (23), 829-839.

Sartorio, C. (2016) *Causation and Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction and

chapters 1, 2, and 4.

Optional:

Fischer, J. M. (2012). *Deep Control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1-sections I and II.

McKenna, M., & Pereboom, D. (2016). *Free Will: A Contemporary Introduction*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 5.

II. Intuitions regarding free will (Eddy Nahmias)

Our goal in these sessions is to consider two questions and various answers that offered in response to them. (1) Why are people's intuitions about free will relevant to philosophical debates about free will? (This question raises a number of others, such as: What are intuitions and what is their relation to concepts, theories, and beliefs? Whose intuitions are relevant? and when are intuitions (un)reliable?). (2) What are people's intuitions about free will, and related concepts such as choice, ability, moral responsibility, blame/praise, and consciousness? (This question raises a number of others regarding how we might probe and measure people intuitions and conceptual usage.)

Given the audience and location of these seminars, it will be particularly useful if participants consider how these questions become more complex as we consider intuitions across different cultures and languages. We will also discuss some recent challenges to free will and moral responsibility from sciences like neuroscience and psychology and people's intuitions about these challenges.

*Please note that there will be an extra afternoon session on July 19 where a workshop on experimental designs for testing free will intuitions will take place.

July 18.

Before reading any papers, participants should take the survey here:

<https://www.questionpro.com/t/ABG2yZejcJ>

Required readings:

Murray, D., & Nahmias, E. (2014). Explaining Away Incompatibilist Intuitions. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 88(2), 434-467.

Nadelhoffer, T., Rose, D., Buckwalter, W., & Nichols, S. Natural Compatibilism, Indeterminism, and Intrusive Metaphysics. (manuscript)

Optional:

Rather than suggesting specific papers, many of which would be papers to which the ones above respond or supplement, I'd like each participant to choose one more paper in the area of experimental philosophy on free will, read it, and write a paragraph summary which they could share with the group. Try to pick a paper that looks interesting to you and that you think might suggest interesting follow-up studies: <https://philpapers.org/browse/experimental-philosophy-free-will>

July 19.

Required readings:

Nahmias, E., Shepard, J., & Reuter, J. (2014). It's OK if 'My Brain Made Me Do It': People's Intuitions about Free Will and Neuroscientific Prediction. *Cognition* 133(2), 502-513, 2014.

Shepherd, J. (2015). Consciousness, free will, and moral responsibility: Taking the folk seriously. *Philosophical Psychology*, 28 (7), 929-946.

Smith, K. (2011). Taking Aim at Free Will. *Nature*, 477, 23-25.

Optional:

Based on the readings, come up with one experiment you think would be useful follow-up or extension to address the controversies in the field. Feel free to consider minor tweaks to scenarios or experimental questions or brand-new ideas or ones that might be carried out in Spanish.

III. Libertarianism (Daniel Speak)

We will begin by seeking to appreciate some of the main motivations for taking seriously a libertarian conception of free will. Then we will make a concerted effort to understand the structures and vulnerabilities of the main libertarian theories, particularly the event-causal theory and the agent-causal theory. Finally, we will give special attention to two concerns that a satisfying libertarian account needs to address. The first concern is with the problem of *luck* in indeterministic accounts of free will. The second concern is with the role that broad axiological considerations should play in theory preference.

July 22.

Required readings:

Kane, R. (2007). Libertarianism. In Fischer, J. M., Kane, R., Pereboom, D., & Vargas, M. (Eds.), *Four*

Views on Free Will (pp. 5-43). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

O'Connor, T. (2011). Libertarian Views: Dualist and Agent Causal Theories. In Kane, R. (Ed.), *Oxford Handbook On Free Will, 2nd ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Optional:

Deery, O., Bedke, M., & Nichols, S. (2013). Phenomenal Abilities: Incompatibilism and the Experience of Agency. In Shoemaker, D. (Ed.), *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility Vol. 1* (pp.126–50). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

July 23.

Required readings:

Speak, D (2004). Toward an Axiological Defense of Libertarianism. *Philosophical Topics*, 32, 353- 269.

Adams, R. (1995). Moral Faith. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 92(2), 75-95

Optional:

Pereboom, D. (2014). *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chap- ters 2 and 3.

IV. Free Will and Reasons (Dana Kay Nelkin)

It is a striking point of agreement among a diverse set of theorists, including compatibilists and incompatibilists alike, that free agency belongs to *rational* agents. So it would seem to be a constraint on a plausible theory of free will that it incorporates and explain the connection between freedom and reasons. Many contemporary compatibilist accounts of free agency (and moral responsibility) place the ability to recognize and respond to reasons at the heart of their views, and we will canvass some important attempts to do so, exploring their strengths and identifying remaining challenges. Finally, although “reasons-responsiveness” is most often associated with contemporary compatibilist accounts, incompatibilists, too, need to address the purported connection between freedom and reasons, and they face their own challenges in reconciling a role for reasons in free action with indeterminism. We will thus conclude by examining one well-developed incompatibilist attempt.

July 24.

Required readings:

McKenna, M. (forthcoming). Reasons-Responsiveness, Frankfurt-examples, and the Free Will Ability. In Nelkin, D., & Pereboom, D. (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook for Moral Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wolf, S. (1988). Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility. In Schoeman, F. D. (Ed.), *Character, and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology* (pp. 46-62). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Optional:

Fischer, J. M., & Mark, R. (1988). *Responsibility and Control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 and 3.

Nelkin, D. K. (2011). *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction and chapters 1, 6 and 7.

July 25 (morning session).

Required readings:

O'Connor, T. (1995). Agent-Causation. In O'Connor, T. (Ed.), *Causes, and Events: Essays on Indeterminism and Free Will* (pp. 173-200). New York: Oxford University Press. Esp. sections 4 and 5 on Reasons Explanation.

Vargas, M. (2013). *Building Better Beings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 5 and 7.

Optional:

Clarke, R. (1986). Contrastive Rational Explanation of Free Choice. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 46 (138), 185-201.

V. Dispositions (Randolph Clarke)

Free will is widely conceived in terms of abilities to act. An agent's abilities to act are powers that the agent has. The dispositions of inanimate objects, too—dispositions such as solubility and flammability—are powers. And several theorists have proposed that abilities to act can be explicated in terms of, or in the same manner as, dispositions. Such dispositional accounts of ability are sometimes advanced in support of compatibilism (the thesis that free will is compatible with determinism). In this section of the seminar, we will examine some recent dispositional accounts of ability as well as some critiques of these accounts, with an eye to what light these accounts (and their shortcomings) shed on free will.

July 25 (afternoon session).

Required readings:

Fara, M. (2008). Masked Abilities and Compatibilism. *Mind*, 117, 843-865.

Vihvelin, K. (2003). Free Will Demystified: A Dispositional Account. *Philosophical Topics*, 32 (1), 427-450.

Optional:

Smith, M. (2003). Rational Capacities, or: How to Distinguish Recklessness, Weakness, and Compulsion. In Stroud, S., & Tappolet, C. (Eds.) *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality* (pp. 17-38). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Vihvelin, K. (2013). *Causes, Laws, and Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press. Section 3 of ch. 1, and ch. 6

July 26.

Required readings:

Clarke, R. (2009). Dispositions, Abilities to Act, and Free Will: The New Dispositionalism. *Mind*, 118 (470), 323-351.

Whittle, A. (2010). Dispositional Abilities. *Philosophers' Imprint*, 10 (12), 2-23.

Optional:

Clarke, R. (forthcoming). Free Will and Abilities to Act. Wendel, V.S., Langenfeld., & Breul (Eds.), *Streit um die Freiheit: Philosophische und theologische Beiträge*.

Vetter, B. (2019). Are Abilities Dispositions? *Synthese*, 196, 201-220.

VI. Free Will Skepticism (Derk Pereboom)

Free will skeptics deny that we have free will in the sense at issue in the traditional debate. On one conception, this sort of free will is the control in action required for our deserving, in a basic sense, to be blamed or punished for immoral decisions, and to be praised or rewarded for those that are morally exemplary. Spinoza argued that due to general facts about the nature of the universe we lack this sort of free will. Specifically, he held that our actions would not be free in this sense if

they were

causally determined by factors beyond our control. Free will skeptics have contended that indeterminism also rules out the free will at issue. They've argued, for instance, that if our actions were indeterministically caused exclusively by events, we would lack this sort of free will, since these indeterministic causal histories of decisions would be as threatening to this sort of free will as deterministic histories are. Thus it may be that such free will is ruled out whether or not determinism is true.

Spinoza maintained that we can live with a conception that rejects this type of free will. I argue that rejecting free will and basic desert would nevertheless allow for a forward-looking conception of moral responsibility, one that aims at protection, moral formation, restoration of integrity, and reconciliation. I also contend that lacking this sort of free would also not jeopardize our sense of ourselves as agents capable of rational deliberation, and that it is compatible with measures for dealing with crime focused on protection of potential victims and rehabilitation of criminals. And although denying free will would transform some of the attitudes typically engaged in the personal relationships and in the aspirations for achievement that make our lives meaningful, the result might well be beneficial overall.

July 29.

Required readings:

McKenna, M., & Pereboom, D. (2016). *Free Will: A Contemporary Introduction*. New York: Routledge. Chapter. 9.

Pereboom, D. (2014). *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 4.

Sartorio, C. (2018). Precs of Causation and Free Will. *Philosophical Studies*, 175, (6), 1513–1516.

Optional:

Clarke, R. (2005). An Argument for the Impossibility of Moral Responsibility. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29, 13-24.

Strawson, G. (1994). The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility. *Philosophical Studies*, 75, 5-24.

July 30.

Required readings:

Pereboom, D. (2014). *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 8.

Pereboom, D. (2017). Responsibility, Regret, and Protest. In, Shoemaker, D. (Ed.), *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility 4* (pp. 121-140). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Optional:

Nelkin, D. (2015). Friendship, Freedom, and Special Obligations. In Andrei Buckareff, A., Moya, C., & Rosell, S (Eds.), *Agency, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility* (pp. 226-250). UK: Palgrave MacMillan. Shabo, S. (2012). Where Love and Resentment Meet. *Philosophical Review*, 121, 95-124.

VII. Theology and the Problem of Evil (Kevin Timpe)

These two days will explore some of the ways that free will plays in contemporary philosophy of religion. The first day will lay out the range of debates in philosophy of religion where free will comes up. It will also address the question, “Why is libertarianism so much more frequent among philosophers of religion than among philosophers in general?” The second day will focus specifically on the relationship between various views of free will and the problem(s) of evil. The additional readings for this day extend that line of inquiry to a particular version of the problem of evil that focuses on the Christian doctrine of hell.

August 1.

Required readings:

Pereboom, D. (2016). Libertarianism and Theological Determinism. In Timpe, K., Speak, D. (Eds.), *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns* (pp. 121-131). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Timpe, K. (forthcoming). Free Will. In Goetz, S., & Taliaferro, C. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Routledge.

Vargas, M. (2016). The Runeberg Problem: Theism, Libertarianism, and Motivated Reasoning. In Timpe, K., Speak, D. (Eds.), *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns* (pp. 27- 47). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Optional:

Baker, L. R. (2003). Why Christians Should not be Libertarians: An Augustinian Challenge. *Faith and Philosophy*, 20 (4), 460-478.

Pawl, T., & Timpe, K. (2009). Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven. *Faith and Philosophy*, 26 (4), 396-417.

August 2.

Required readings:

Johnson, D. (2016). Calvinism and the Problem of Evil: A Map of the Territory. In Alexander, D. E., & Johnson, D. (Eds.), *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil* (pp.19-55). Oregon: Pickwick Publications.

Turner, J. (2013). Compatibilism and the Free Will Defense. *Faith and Philosophy*, 30 (2), 125-137.

Wielenberg, E. (2016). Plantingian Theism and the Free-Will Defense. *Religious Studies*, 52, 451– 460

Optional:

Almeida, M. (2017). Compatibilism and the Free Will Defense. In McCann, H.J. (ed.), *Free Will and Classical Theism: The Significance of Freedom in Perfect Being Theology* (pp. 56-68). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ekstrom, L. (2016). The Cost of Freedom. In Timpe, K., Speak, D. (Eds.), *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns* (pp. 62-78). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hart, M. (2016). Calvinism and the Problem of Hell. In Alexander, D. E., & Johnson, D. (Eds.), *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil* (pp.248-272). Oregon: Pickwick Publications.

Speak, D. (2016). Free Will and the Problem of Evil. In Timpe, K., Griffith, M., & Levy, N. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Free Will* (pp.490-499). New York: Routledge.

Stump, E. (1986). Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and the Love of God. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 16, (2), 181-198.