

HUMBOLDT CONVERSATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

16:00 -18:00
GWZ H2 1.16

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Alison Fernandes is an Assistant Professor in Philosophy at Trinity College Dublin (University of Dublin). She works in metaphysics and philosophy of science, with a particular focus on temporal asymmetries, physics and agency. She completed a Philosophy PhD at Columbia University with a dissertation entitled 'A Deliberative Account of Causation'. Here she argued we should make sense of causation by thinking about its relevance for decision-making. She's previously held postdoctoral positions at the University of Warwick (on an interdisciplinary AHRC project: 'Time: Between Metaphysics and Psychology') and at the Center for Philosophy of Science, University of Pittsburgh.

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WHY DO WE DELIBERATE ON THE FUTURE?

When deciding what to do, we deliberate on future states, and never on past states. While we might think about our reasons for our past decisions, we never take past states to be 'open' to decision now in the same way as future states. What is the reason for this asymmetry? A natural answer appeals to causation: it is because our decisions now can *cause* future states (but not past states) that we deliberate only on the future. But assuming a temporal asymmetry of causation is problematic if we also want to use features of deliberation to *explain* the asymmetry of causation—as a number of recent 'agent-based' accounts of causation do. In this talk I'll consider how we might give a non-causal account of why we deliberate on the future. I'll ultimately recommend an approach that appeals to the *function* of deliberation.

BACKGROUND TEXTS:

Fernandes, Alison. 2017. A Deliberative Approach to Causation. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 95(3): 686–708.
Price, Huw. 1991. Agency and Probabilistic Causality. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 42: 157–76.

For more information, additional reading and registration please contact:
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