

PHILOSOPHY MEETS COGNITIVE SCIENCE



Stiftung
Mercator



Mercator
Research Group

Organization and contact: Prof. Dr. Markus Werning.

Website: www.rub.de/phil-lang.

Venue: Mi., 30 June 2010, 18-20, in room UV 03/310.

All interested students, scientists, and scholars are cordially invited to the following talk of the research colloquium:

Prof. Dr. Achille C. Varzi

(Columbia University, New York)

The Metaphysics of Time Travel

Might we truly be able to move about in time, just as we ordinarily move about in space? Today, few would question that deliberate change in temporal location is logically possible. There is no contradiction in the thought that I could step into a time machine and travel backwards to visit my grandfather, or forwards to visit my grandchildren. That is, there is no contradiction provided that we take time travel to involve influencing the course of history rather than changing it (no event can both happen and not happen). But is time travel metaphysically possible? Is there a genuinely possible world—a way this world might be, as opposed to a merely coherent scenario—in which one can freely change one's location in time? Here is where puzzlement and bewilderment lead to philosophical controversy. For the answer depends on one's views concerning a wide range of other matters, and such matters are themselves the subject of major philosophical controversy. For example: Is time travel compatible with free will? Does it presuppose realism about time? Is it committed to a perdurantist conception of identity? Would it require reverse causation, possibly causal loops? In this talk I will review some of these questions, along with their widespread ramifications, and I'll suggest a general way of coping with the embarrassing cosmological jet lags that they seem to engender.

Achille C. Varzi is Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Department at Columbia University, New York. His main research interests are in logic, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language and has published extensively in these areas—most recently on such topics as ontology, mereology, vagueness, persistence through time, the notion of logical form. He also has a keen interest in the practice of philosophy for children. Currently he is an editor of *The Journal of Philosophy*, a subject editor of *Synthese* and of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and an associate or advisory editor of several other journals. Web site: <http://www.columbia.edu/~av72>.