

In everyday life, we naturally assume that it is up to us how we act, and that we are therefore responsible for our actions. However, free will in this strong, 'libertarian' sense – involving a choice between alternatives – is increasingly being questioned by philosophers and scientists. While traditional concerns were predicated on the deterministic laws of classical physics, today sceptics also cite biology and neuroscience. We are told that our genes or our brains, not we, decide what we want and how we act. This conference gathers leading experts in philosophy, biology and neuroscience who argue the opposite. Cutting-edge research into the biological and neural basis of human and animal agency challenges deterministic assumptions, adding to doubts from quantum physics and pointing to non-reductionist views of agency and action causation. At the same time, recent advances in the philosophy of biology and metaphysics offer new conceptual resources for understanding agency and free will under indeterminism. The conference explores the resulting prospects for a scientifically grounded, ontologically robust 'libertarian' concept of free will, breaking new ground in interdisciplinary research on free will.

This conference is associated with the Elise Richter-research project "**Bio-Agency and Natural Freedom**", led by Dr. Anne Sophie Meincke and funded by the Austrian Science Fund (grant DOI 10.55776/V714). It is hosted by the **Austrian Academy of Sciences** and kindly supported by the **Young Academy of the Austrian Academy of Sciences** and the **Faculty of Philosophy and Education of the University of Vienna**.

The conference is preceded by a **Young Academy Distinguished Lecture** by Alfred R. Mele and Anne Sophie Meincke on the question "Can Biology Help Us Defend Free Will?" on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Both events can be followed via live stream:  
[www.oew.ac.at/veranstaltungen/live](http://www.oew.ac.at/veranstaltungen/live)

To attend in person, please register using the QR code or visit  
[www.oew.ac.at/veranstaltungen/anmeldung/free-will-new-perspectives-from-philosophy-biology-and-neuroscience](http://www.oew.ac.at/veranstaltungen/anmeldung/free-will-new-perspectives-from-philosophy-biology-and-neuroscience)

#### ORGANIZER:

Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW)  
Dr. Anne Sophie Meincke | Member of the Young Academy of the OeAW

#### CONTACT:

Natalie Kapfer-Rupp, BA  
Austrian Academy of Sciences  
T: +43 1 51581-3633 | [natalie.kapfer-rupp@oew.ac.at](mailto:natalie.kapfer-rupp@oew.ac.at)

Please note that photos and films (image and sound) will be taken during the conference.  
Photo: shutterstock / Elena Schweitzer

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AUSTRIAN  
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SCIENCES

11<sup>TH</sup>–12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025  
JOHANNESSAAL  
DR. IGNAZ SEIPEL-PLATZ 2  
1010 VIENNA  
& VIA LIVE STREAM



INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

**FREE WILL**

**NEW PERSPECTIVES FROM  
PHILOSOPHY, BIOLOGY AND  
NEUROSCIENCE**

FWF Österreichischer  
Wissenschaftsfonds



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# PROGRAMME

## WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025

- 09:00 – 09:15\*** WELCOME  
**Anne Sophie Meincke** | Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna, Austria & Member of the Young Academy of the OeAW
- 09:15 – 10:10** **Stephen Mumford** | Department of Philosophy, Durham University, UK  
*Six Theses About Free Will*
- 10:10 – 10:40** COFFEE BREAK
- 10:40 – 11:35** **John Dupré** | Egenis, the Centre for the Study of Life Sciences, University of Exeter, UK  
*Emergent Compatibilism*
- 11:40 – 12:35** **Helen Steward** | Centre for Theoretical Philosophy, University of Leeds, UK  
*Who Are the Agents?*
- 12:35 – 14:00** LUNCH BREAK AND AND GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE MAIN BUILDING OF THE AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES WITH **BERNHARD PLUNGER**
- 14:00 – 14:55** **Christian List** | Munich Center for Mathematical University, LMU Munich, Germany  
*Agency and Indeterminism*
- 14:55 – 15:25** COFFEE BREAK
- 15:25 – 16:20** **Geert Keil** | Department of Philosophy, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany  
*A Threefold Challenge to Event-Causal Libertarianism: Missing Agent, Causal Powers, Chance*
- 16:25 – 17:20** **Anne Sophie Meincke** | Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna, Austria & Member of the Young Academy of the OeAW  
*Scientific Libertarianism: Arguments from the Metaphysics of Biology*
- 19:00** CONFERENCE DINNER FOR SPEAKERS

\* All times indicated: CEST

## THURSDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025

- 09:00 – 09:55** **Alfred R. Mele** | Department of Philosophy, Florida State University, USA  
*On Scientific Libertarianism and the Bar for Free Will*
- 09:55 – 10:25** COFFEE BREAK
- 10:25 – 11:20** **Peter U. Tse** | Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Dartmouth College, USA  
*Second-Order Free Will and Criterial Causation*
- 11:25 – 12:20** **Björn Brembs** | Institute of Zoology – Neurogenetics, University of Regensburg, Germany  
*Beyond Picking and Choosing: the Emerging Neurobiology of Decision-Making*
- 12:20 – 13:30** LUNCH BREAK
- 13:30 – 14:25** **Kevin Mitchell** | Smurfit Institute of Genetics and Institute of Neuroscience, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland  
**Henry Potter** | Smurfit Institute of Genetics and Institute of Neuroscience, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland  
*Free Will in an Indeterministic Universe*
- 14:25 – 14:40** **Johannes Jaeger** | Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna, Austria & Complexity Science Hub, Vienna, Austria  
**Josef Quitterer** | Department of Christian Philosophy, University of Innsbruck, Austria  
*Concluding Reflections*
- 14:40 – 15:00** PLENARY DISCUSSION