

Course codes: BMI-LOTD17-106E.05, BMA-FILD-402.150, BMI-FILD-402.150, BMI-LOTD-106E.07, BBN-FIL18-240.01, BMA-FILD17-240.01, BBN-FIL-402.150

Course title: Theories of time in ancient philosophy

Instructor: László Bene, Associate professor

Time and place: Wednesday, 14.00-15.30, Building i, 1st floor, Room 129.

Schedule:

September 9, 16 and 30 (no class on 23);

October 7, 14, 21 (28 Fall break);

November 4, 11, 18 and 25;

December 2 and 9.

General aim and content of the course:

In this seminar, the most important ancient contributions to the philosophy of time will be examined. We aim to make sense of the ancient accounts of time in their original context, with an eye on later developments.

Problems relating to time were first articulated in Classical Greek philosophy. In Plato, time has a cosmological dimension: it is associated with the regular, periodic motions of the celestial bodies, which yield „numbers”, and it is contrasted with eternity „remaining in one”, the way of being of the intelligible paradigm on which the cosmos is modelled. Aristotle examines time in the context of the analysis of physical motion; nonetheless, his account grants the human observer an important role in the constitution of time. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, subjects the physical accounts of time of his predecessors to a comprehensive critique, and he argues that time must be connected with the Soul as a cosmic causal principle. By doing so, he develops an original interpretation of Plato’s account of time to which he emphatically appeals. Augustine, while he also propounds a „psychological” theory of time, focusses on the human soul as the subject of time-perception and of time-measurement.

Requirements:

- Students are expected to attend the sessions (3 absences at most), to prepare the readings for the classes, and to actively participate in the discussion;
- to turn in four short papers on the source texts which are discussed in the classes (500 words each);
- to turn in a short reflection (500-1000 words) on an article or book chapter of their choice from the secondary literature (the choice must be agreed with the instructor in advance);

Grading will be based on home-works (40%) and on in-class activity (60%).

For the use of AI, the regulations of the Faculty are in force:

<https://www.btk.elte.hu/en/regulations-regarding-the-use-of-artificial-intelligence-tools-at-the-faculty-of-humanities-of-elte>

Students are required to report the results of their use of AI tools for educational purposes in the main text and in the statement accompanying the paper. However, completing and

attaching the "Declaration on the use of artificial intelligence tools" is **not** a mandatory condition for completing the subject.

Mandatory readings and schedule (the sources texts have been uploaded to the Files of our Teams group).

1–3. session: Plato, Timaeus 27c–48b

4–5. session: Aristotle, Physics IV. 10–14.

6–8. session: Plotinus, On eternity and time III.7.1-6; III.7.7-10; III.7.11-13.

9–11 session: Agustine, Confessions X.

12. session: Conclusions.

Recommended readings:

Comprehensive accounts:

Callahan, John Francis: *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy*. Rev. ed. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979 (1st edition 1948).

Mesch, Walter: *Reflektierte Gegenwart. Eine Studie über Zeit und Ewigkeit bei Platon, Aristoteles, Plotin und Augustinus*. Klostermann, 2003.

Ricoeur, Paul (1983), *Temps et récit*, vol. 1: L'intrigue et le récit historique. Paris: Éditions du Seuil. (translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer as *Time and Narrative*, University of Chicago Press)

Sorabji, Richard: *Time, Creation and the Continuum. Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. London: Duckworth, 1983.

Wagner, M.: „Real Time in Aristotle, Plotinus, and Augustine”, *Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 4 (1996), 67–116.

Whittaker, John: *God Time Being. Two Studies in the Transcendental Tradition in Greek Philosophy*. Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. Suppl. XXIII, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1971.

Wilberding, James: „Eternity in Ancient Philosophy”, In Y. Melamed (ed.): *Eternity*. Oxford University Press, 2016, 14-55.

Zachhuber, Johannes: *Time and Soul. From Aristotle to Augustine*. De Gruyter, 2022.

Commentaries on relevant texts, studies on individual philosophers:

Plato:

Brague, Rémi: „Pour en finir avec le temps, image mobile de l'éternité”, in R. Brague: *Du temps chez Platon et Aristote. Quatre études*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1982.

Cornford, Francis M.: *Plato's Cosmology*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937.

Johns, Jeffrey: „On the translation of *Timaeus* 38b6-c3”, *Études Platoniciennes* 11 (2014) <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesplatoniciennes.599>.

Mohr, Richard D.: „Plato on Time and Eternity”, in R. Mohr: *The Platonic Cosmology*. Brill, Leiden, 1985, 53–81.

Aristotle:

Annas, Julia: „Aristotle, Number and Time”, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1975), 97–113.

Coope, Ursula, *Time for Aristotle: Physics IV 10–14*. OUP, 2005.

Hussey, Edward: *Aristotle: Physics, Books III and IV: Translated with Introduction and Notes*. Clarendon Press, 1983.

Roark, Tony: *Aristotle on Time: A Study on the Physics*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Plotinus:

Chiaradonna, Riccardo: „Time and Eternity”, In L. P. Gerson – J. Wilberding: *The New Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Cambridge University Press, 267–288.

Beierwaltes, Werner: *Plotin: Über Ewigkeit und Zeit* (Enneade III.7). Übersetzung, Einleitung, Kommentar. Klostermann, 1967.

McGuire, J.E. & Strange, S.K.: „An Annotated Translation of Plotinus *Ennead* iii 7. *On Eternity and Time*”. *Ancient Philosophy* 8, 251-271.

Strange, Steven Keith: „Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time”. In: L. Schrenk (ed.), *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994, 22–53.

Augustine:

Chadwick, Henry: *Saint Augustine: Confessions*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes. Oxford University Press, 1991.

Flasch, Kurt: *Was ist Zeit? Augustinus von Hippo. Das XI. Buch der Confessiones. Historisch-philosophische Studie*. Klostermann, 1993.

Teske, Roland: „World-soul and Time in Saint Augustine”, *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983), 75–92.

Philippe Hoffmann: Temps et éternité dans le livre XI des *Confessions* : Augustin, Plotin, Porphyre et saint Paul, *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques*, 63 (2017), 31-79.

