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The College of Liberal Arts Research Academy (CLARA) and the Department of Philosophy

2025 Scholl Lecture: Does Philosophy Need to Know its History?



Monday, April 14th, 2025
06:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
KRAN 140

Prof. Adrian Moore

St. Hughes College
University of Oxford

Register for lunchtime talk & discussion
Noon – 2:00 p.m.
LWSN B134

In this lecture I address the question whether philosophy needs to know its history, by comparing and contrasting philosophy with other areas of enquiry. In particular, I emphasize a feature of philosophy that distinguishes it from every other area of enquiry, namely that its history can be a significant contribution to it. That already points towards a positive answer to the question, although the answer takes some teasing out and towards the end of the lecture I distinguish between what follows from this answer concerning philosophy as a discipline and what follows from it concerning the practice of individual philosophers. In between I explore two factors that give philosophy this distinctive relation to its history: what I call Self-Consciousness and what I call Appropriation. By Self-Consciousness I mean the fact that the nature of philosophy is itself a philosophical issue; by Appropriation I mean the fact that, with respect to any great philosophical idea of the past that is no longer viable, there always remains a question about what we can do with it.

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