

## Bonn Melbourne Seminar in Decision Making and Computational Psychiatry

### Agential Indeterminism

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### Abstract

There is much discussion on whether free will is compatible with determinism. Free-will compatibilists argue that it is, while incompatibilists argue that it isn't. There is less discussion, by contrast, on whether agency itself is compatible with determinism. Given how central the idea of agency is to our human self-understanding and to the social sciences, this question is hardly less important. Helen Steward has recently defended a striking view she calls "agency incompatibilism": "there could be no agents or actions at all in a deterministic world" (Steward 2012, p. 115). If Steward is right, then determinism poses an even greater threat to our conventional understanding of the place of humans in the world than typically recognized by incompatibilists about free will. My aim in this talk is to revisit Steward's position and to defend an argument for a subtly different form of agency incompatibilism, which I think will be harder to resist, especially from a naturalistic perspective. I argue that our current best understanding of intentional agency in the sciences of human behaviour presupposes a form of indeterminism, which I call "agential indeterminism". Without such indeterminism, there could not be any intentional agency as conventionally understood. I will explore the upshots of this conclusion, including its compatibility with physical determinism.

**Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023, 9am (CEST)**

<https://uni-bonn.zoom.us/j/67862809703?pwd=WHM3b3lUUFJYY2x0ekxLZUhxS3UvUT09>

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