

Agency in an indeterministic world

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We have good reasons to assume that determinism, the thesis that there is just one possibility for the future, is false. What does this mean for agency? Certainly, determinism seems to be a threat for agency, but isn't indeterminism just as bad, or even worse? Don't we have to look for a third way, avoiding both determinism and indeterminism, to ground agential powers?

In my talk I want to explore various ways in which determinism could be false (amounting to various ways in which indeterminism, as the negation of determinism, could be true). I will argue that some varieties of indeterminism would indeed pose grave problems for agency. For example, if anything could follow upon anything, then the world would just be an erratic mess, with none of the stability that is certainly needed to ground complex agents. We have, however, no reason to assume that the indeterminism of our world is of such a kind. The main challenge then is to build a model for agential powers that is compatible with realistic, limited indeterminism such as occurs in our world. I will highlight the conceptual difficulties involved in this task, but argue that it does not seem hopeless. I will end by sketching a way in which such a model could be built, incorporating basic indeterministic powers in a way that is meaningful for an agent.