

13<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Innsbruck

Department of Christian Philosophy, University of Innsbruck



Workshop of the Austrian Science Fund-Project "Powers and the Identity of Agents"  
Department of Christian Philosophy at the Leopold Franzen University Innsbruck

**FWF**

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

**Organisation:**

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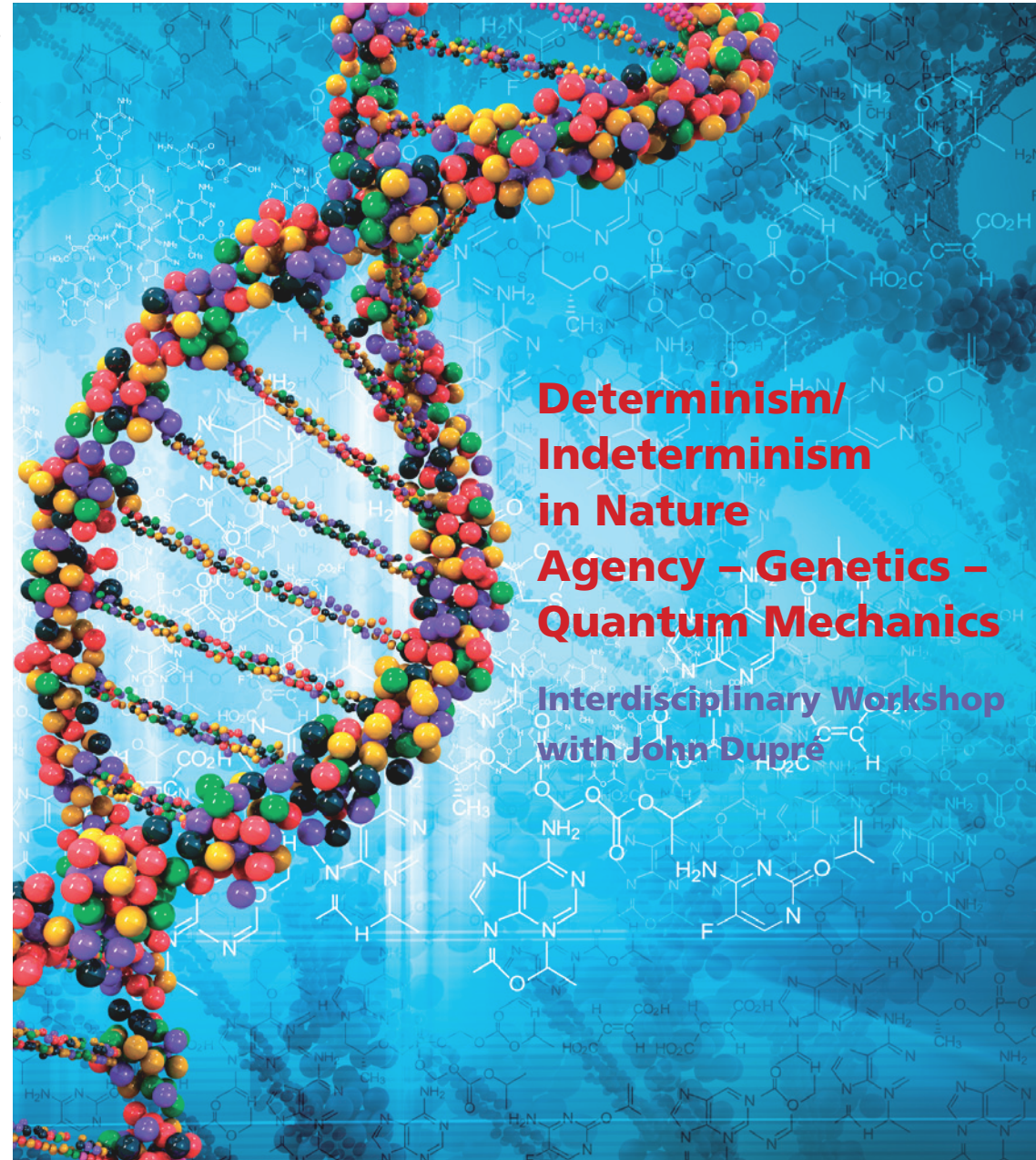
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[http://www.uibk.ac.at/philtheol/powers/conferences/workshop\\_determinism.html](http://www.uibk.ac.at/philtheol/powers/conferences/workshop_determinism.html)

Registration required.

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**Determinism/  
Indeterminism  
in Nature  
Agency – Genetics –  
Quantum Mechanics**

**Interdisciplinary Workshop  
with John Dupré**

## Interdisciplinary Workshop with John Dupré

(Director of Egenis, the Centre for the Study of Life Sciences, University of Exeter)

In everyday-life, we experience ourselves as free agents, who choose their acts based on deliberation and the possibility to do otherwise. At the same time, we conceive of ourselves as integral parts of nature, as organisms amenable to biological explanation. How does this go together? How is it possible that there exist freely acting organisms like us and maybe other animals? What is nature like so as to allow for free agency?

These questions are pressing since for a long time scientists and philosophers agreed that, actually, there was no place for free agency in nature. Nature was seen as a mechanistic system governed by strictly deterministic laws, thus ruling out any real possibility of doing otherwise and reducing deliberation to a causally inefficacious mere epiphenomenon of neuro-physiological processes in animals' brains.

Recently, however, this picture of nature has been doubted from the perspectives of various disciplines. Besides the well-known arguments from quantum-mechanics, there is, especially, a remarkable tendency to biologically motivated indeterminism amongst philosophers of science.

One of the most important figures in this regard is John Dupré, a distinguished expert in philosophy of biology. According to him, the essential structures of life including its genetic organization support an indeterminist picture of nature which, then, allows for free agency. The general idea of his so-called "Indeterminist Compatibilism" is that since the causal order of the world actually is incomplete, there is space for natural agents to fill in the gaps by their free actions. Higher organisms as strongly autonomous systems impose order on their more or less chaotic surroundings.

The workshop aims at exploring Dupré's doctrine of "Indeterminist Compatibilism" in order to deepen our understanding of the possibility of free agency in nature. This will be done in an interdisciplinary way by bringing Dupré into dialogue with experts from philosophical action theory, genetics and quantum mechanics.

### Contributions by:

**Michael Brownnutt** (Department of Experimental Physics, Medical University of Innsbruck)

**Josef Quitterer** (Department of Christian Philosophy, University of Innsbruck)

**Anne Sophie Spann** (Department of Christian Philosophy, University of Innsbruck)

**Gabriele Werner-Felmayer** (Biocenter Innsbruck, Medical University of Innsbruck)

**Johannes Zschocke** (Department of Human Genetics, Medical University of Innsbruck)

## Program

### March 12<sup>th</sup> 2014

18:00 Guest lecture by **John Dupré**: "Indeterminist Compatibilism"

Dinner at *Weisses Rössl*, Kiebachgasse 8

### March 13<sup>th</sup> 2014

10:00 – 10:15 **Bruno Niederbacher** (Head of Department) and **Anne Sophie Spann**: Address of Welcome

10:15 – 11:15 **Johannes Zschocke**: Nature, Nurture, Anything Else? A View from Human Genetics  
**John Dupré**: *Replies*

11:30 – 12:30 **Anne Sophie Spann**: Resolving the Dilemma of Free Will? Dupré's Third Way between Compatibilism and Incompatibilism  
**John Dupré**: *Replies*

Lunch at *Sahib*, Sillgasse 3

15:00 – 16:00 **Gabriele Werner-Felmayer**: Perspectives from Biomedicine and Bioethics on Indeterminist Compatibilism  
**John Dupré**: *Replies*

16:30 – 17:30 **Michael Brownnutt**: Thought Experiments on Minimal Volitional Systems  
**John Dupré**: *Replies*

17:30 – 18:30 **Josef Quitterer**: Can Processes be Agents?  
**John Dupré**: *Replies*

Dinner at *Dengg*, Riesengasse 11-13