

“Assessing Agent Causal Libertarianism in the Free Will Debate”

Oct. 22, 2018. Starts 9:30 at the Institute of Philosophy, Jilská 1, Praha 1, Zasedací místnost (2nd floor)

Probabilistic Explanation of Free Action

T. W. O'Connor (Indiana University, Bloomington)
toconnor@indiana.edu

An indeterministic account of freedom of action is sketched within a powers-based metaphysics of the natural world. Four objections to the adequacy of this account, all centered on its acceptance of objective probabilities governing free actions, are considered and rebutted.

The same-control argument revisited

László Bernáth (Budapest)
Bernath.Laszlo@btk.mta.hu

I outline a new version of the so-called same-control argument (Mele 2017, 142), which attempts to show that indeterministic event-causal causation cannot provide a level of control sufficient for free will because “the active control that is exercised on [an event-causal libertarian] view is just the same as that exercised on an event-causal compatibilist account” (Clarke 2003, p. 220; cite Mele 2017, 142). Alfred Mele claims that the same-control argument is unsound for a variety reasons, the most important of which is that regulative control (favored by libertarians) and guidance control (favored by compatibilists) are quite different and only the former rules out determinism.

The present paper argues that merely event-causal relations cannot secure genuine self-control, regardless of the truth or falsity of determinism. As a result, both indeterministic and deterministic forms of event-causation are insufficient for freedom.

The gist of the argument is the following contention. In worlds where all causation is event-causation, only a kind of superficial self-control is present, one that consists in an individual's part controlling some of its other parts. But this is not genuine self-control, because the activity of the controlling part depends on its properties, the laws of nature, and the relevant stimulus conditions. Since none of these are under its direct control, the controller part does not make the individual capable of controlling its activity in any meaningful way.

In contrast, agent-causal libertarianism provides a sufficient ontological basis for genuine self-control, provided that substances can have causal powers which sometimes manifest in ways that are independent of the substance's current properties. In that case, the agent, identified as a substance, can be conceived to have direct control over the manifestation of its independent causal power, and so agents-as-

substances can be conceived to exercise genuine self-control by controlling the way their agent-causal powers manifest.

Acting for a Reason and Moral Responsibility in the Jesuit Arguments for Agent Causality

Michał Głowala (Wrocław)
mm.glowala@gmail.com

In a XVIIth century Jesuit-Thomist debate (in many ways parallel to the O'Connor-Lowe debate on agent causality) the Jesuits defend the claim that, at least in the case of rational agents, the substance of the agent causes *immediately* the actions that are manifestations of the agent's powers: *substantia immediate concurrat effective ad suas operationes exercendas*. This claim amounts to saying that we must ascribe to the substance an action which is *not* a manifestation of any of its (accidental) powers; it is just *triggering* of a relevant power by the very substance. This *triggering* of a relevant power is just the substance's immediate contribution to the action *preceding* the very manifestation of the power (both the Thomists and Lowe reject such an immediate contribution of the substance). So, in the case of the acts of the will, the volition is a manifestation of the power of will, but, according to the Jesuits, it has to be preceded by an action of the substance itself which is *causing* the volition by the substance; this immediate contribution of the substance is *not* a manifestation of the power of will. In the case of immanent actions, the Jesuit standpoint seems close to the claim that they are just *causings* of the agent's immanent states (a standpoint embraced explicitly by the Polish Jesuit Marcin Śmiglecki (*Logica*, disp. XVII, q. 4)).

In my paper I will present and evaluate some of the arguments for the Jesuit standpoint presented by Suarez (*Disp. met.* 18, s. 5, n. 2-3) and Arriaga (*Cursus phil.*, Disp. III *De an.*, s.1), namely the arguments concerning (i) acting for a reason and the rationality of the will and (ii) moral responsibility.

The transcendental argument for agential libertarianism

Bob Lockie (London)
Bob.Lockie@uwl.ac.uk

This paper develops a modern version of the transcendental argument for a self-determined libertarianism. The argument is a swift version of that to be found in Chapter 8 of Lockie (2018). The argument in synopsis is as follows: If determinism is true, then no-one can do otherwise – and therefore no-one can reason otherwise. Assuming that the ability to reason otherwise is necessary for someone to be held epistemically irresponsible, no-one may then be held responsible for their intellectually wrong actions or unjustified, irrational, cognition. But if no-one is responsible for their unjustified cognition then no-one is epistemically justified either – in the intended, deontologically-internalist, sense. If no-one is ever, under any circumstances, epistemically justified (in the intended, internalist, sense) then one who contends that determinism is true is without epistemic justification. So, one cannot be epistemically justified in claiming that determinism is true. So, determinism

is an intrinsically unjustified theory. The position that this argument is taken to defend is not that of indeterminism, whether event-causal or acausal, beset as these latter are of problems all their own (namely Mind Argument – randomness – problems of control). It is instead a freedom of self-determination (in light of one's reasons) – a position that is a close cousin to, and effectively (waiving qualifications) synonymous with, agent-causal indeterminism. Objections to this argument are flagged for more comprehensive treatment as and if they arise in discussion. Among these are: • Objections to epistemic deontologism. • Objections to the 'ought' implies 'can' entailment from deontology to freedom. • Objections which work from a soft-determinist treatment of this 'can'. • Objections which work from a global asymmetry view (Wolf, Nelkin) to maintain that we may be justified even though we could not have done otherwise (notwithstanding that we could only be unjustified were we able to do otherwise). • Objections to the transfer principle in the consequence argument. • Objections which claim this whole style of argument is question-begging. • Objections from reasons-responsive compatibilisms.

Reference

Lockie, R. (2018). *Free Will and Epistemology: A Defence of the Transcendental Argument for Freedom*; London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

The (longer) version of this argument, from Chapter 8 of my book, may be found by following the clickable 'preview' link here:

<https://freewillandepistemology.com/about-the-book/>

As a separate link it is here:

<https://bloomsburycp3.codemanager.com/viewer/5b1d0ebec15c52da1d9217fb>

Agent Causation and Contrastive Explanation

Stylianou Panagiotou (York)
Sp1370@york.ac.uk

Agent causal theories of free will are traditionally charged with a lack of explanatory power. It is typically said that positing an agent as the originator and performer of actions does not explain: i) why the agent acts in such a way as opposed to another, ii) why the agent acts at that time rather than at another time, as well as iii) why actions are not just products of chance.

After presenting several of these challenges, I will argue that the common thread that connects these criticisms is the demand for a contrastive explanation for the performance of the action, its timing, as well as its being something that is genuinely up to the agent. The seeming inability of the appeal to an agent to provide for such contrastive explanations, leads many critics to charge the notion of agent causation with incoherence.

I shall argue that this criticism is mistaken because it ultimately rests on a misunderstanding of the fact that contrastive explanations have to end with appeal to a metaphysical theory's fundamental notions, which are left themselves unexplained. An explanation is always an explanation of some phenomena in terms of more fundamental ones, which in turn are treated as unexplained brute facts. No contrastive explanation of them is needed.

I will conclude the presentation by arguing that such criticisms against agent causal theories stem out of a commitment to other theories with different fundamental notions. Thus, thinkers who reject agent causal theories on such grounds, do not treat them in their own terms. In such cases what is implied is not the incoherence of agent causal theories, but trivially, their inconsistency with theories that do not accept agents and their powers as metaphysically fundamental.