Sublating the Free Will Problematic: Powers, Agency and Causal Determination
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Powers and dispositions are all the rage in contemporary analytic metaphysics.[i] A key

feature of the developing anti-Humean approach is that it reverses the presumed direction of fit

between behavior and laws. From a dispositional realist perspective, laws hold in virtue of the

powers of given kinds of things to effect given kinds of change, not the other way around. It is

not laws, but powers – or, some would say, the bearers of powers – that bring about outcomes.

Dispositional realism therefore lends itself to a conception of causality as consisting in the

display or expression of powers, rather than as anything amounting to sequences, or statements

about sequences, regular or not, counterfactual or not. Finally, unlike for the Humean, for

dispositional realists the relationship between what something can potentially do and the kind

of thing that it is, is one of necessity. This is not to say that a thing must necessarily *express* its

powers[ii] (let alone that the expression thereof will necessarily issue in an associated effect[iii]),

only that a thing of a given kind bears the powers of its kind necessarily.[iv] Jointly, these features

of dispositional realism stand to radically reconfigure the debate in analytic philosophy over

free will. Or so I aim to show. I begin by establishing what the determinism side of the

contemporary free will problematic looks like, from a powers perspective, then do the same for

a range of issues associated with the free will side. (To be clear, by "side" I do not mean

adherents of one or another position; I mean the constituent categories of the conceptual artifice

that is the dichotomy between Humean-inflected determinism and Humean-inflected free will.

(Note also that insofar as Kant adheres to a passivist, nomological conception of causation, both

Kantian-style determinism in relation to phenomena and Kantian-style escape therefrom count

as Humean-inflected for the purposes of the present analysis.) I have made use of the Hegelian term "sublate." To sublate is to re-frame, such that irreconcilable, apparently independent positions may be shown to be misconceived elements of a coherent whole. The claim is that a dispositional realist ontology can be seen to sublate the terms of the free will debate. (Let me also be clear that I do not mean to argue that a powers ontology *solves* the Humean-inflected problem. I mean to say that it reconfigures it, such that it can be seen to have been ill-conceived in the first place.) As it happens, one consequence of the sublation is a bolstering of the thesis of agent-causation. I therefore end the paper by briefly cataloguing the merits of a dispositional realist version of agent-causation as compared to those of an agent-causal view married to an otherwise-Humean metaphysics.

(i) <u>Powers and Determinism</u>

The contemporary free will problematic does not hinge upon the designs of God or Fate. It presumes only that at any given time *t*, it is the case that all future states of the world follow necessarily from present conditions plus the laws of nature. Such a picture – one of an impersonal order, unfolding inexorably, all on its own – gives rise to a secular version of the contrast between the limited efficacy of mortals and the power of God(s) or other supra-natural agents. The question of free will, in this context, isn't so much a question as it is a potentially horrifying bit of logic: if it is true that all events follow deterministically from existing conditions plus invariant laws of nature, then, assuming the rule of p or ~p, it cannot be the case that some do not. Those who would reconcile themselves to a determinism so conceived have several options. They can adopt a restricted sense of "free will" (so that agents will still count as

free even though it is the laws of nature that fix agents' desires, intentions and behavior); they can relax the meaning(s) of "necessitate," "law" and/or "cause" (so that an environment counts as deterministic in virtue of being characterized by merely accidental regularity); they can do both; or they can accept with equanimity the implication that agents, being unable to determine outcomes, do not have free will. The first three moves are associated with various forms of compatibilism, the last with hard determinism, i.e., the thesis of determinism combined with that of incompatibilism. Those who are taken aback, meanwhile, have the option of maintaining (a) that free actions are spontaneous, and thus uncaused; (b) that free actions are indeterministically caused, consistent with probabilistic rather than deterministic laws; (c) that free actions involve what from this perspective is taken to be an entirely different kind of causation than that which applies to all other events, viz., agent-causation.[v]

The nomological determinism that anchors the contemporary free will problematic trades upon concepts that are of independent interest to metaphysicians. And as I've noted, parties to the debate are permitted to deploy different substantive accounts of these terms – as are philosophers generally. For example, one might have thought that Hume had rejected the very necessity required to motivate the problematic in the first place. But Hume is regarded as a classical compatibilist. Having stipulated that necessity means "expectation based upon a customary experience of constant conjunction," he concludes that determinism entails only that people act according to habit.[vi] Of course, contemporary Humeans are more likely to defend accounts of causation according to which regularity is analyzed in terms of subjunctive conditionals rather than impressions, but loosening the hold of "necessitated by" is a signature device of compatibilism, a move not unique to Hume. Here's Kai Nielsen, for example:

Legal laws *prescribe* a certain course of action. … But laws of nature … do not constrain you; rather they are statements of regularities, of *de facto* invariable sequences that are part of the world. In talking of such natural laws we often bring in an uncritical use of "force," as if the earth were being pushed and pulled around by the sun. … Without the anthropomorphic embellishment, it becomes evident that a determinist commits himself, when he asserts that A causes B, to the view that whenever an event or act of type A occurs, an event of type B will occur. The part about compulsion or constraint is metaphorical."[vii]

Incompatibilists, by contrast, are apt to presume that causal relations have genuinely modal traction, and thus that a nomologically deterministic environment would indeed be one characterized by constraint (though there are certainly compatibilists, too, who set themselves a higher bar than Nielsen in this regard). Against the backdrop of this interface between the metaphysics of causation and debates over agency, the first question that I want to pose is this: what happens to the determinism side of the free will problematic if one adopts a dispositional realist ontology? I shall suggest that it gives way to what I'll call a ***non***-deterministic framework, one that preserves elements of determinism and indeterminism alike. Again, this is what is meant by "sublate." The point here is that it is not just the entire problematic that is sublated, but also the deterministic "side" or component of it on its own. But let me proceed by first considering the relationship between a belief in powers and standard versions of determinism and indeterminism.

Stephen Mumford and Rani Lill Anjum have argued that dispositional realists can be determinists because causation need not be "the vehicle by which determinism does its business."[viii] In their view:

[t]he core idea in determinism is fixity of the future by the past. … One 'causally neutral' statement of determinism would be that the total state of the world *phi sub 1* at *time t sub 1* dictates that only one state *phi sub 2* is

possible at *t sub 2* … we might also say that if two deterministic worlds coincide in their histories until time *t*, then they will coincide in their histories after *t*. The past can thus necessitate, fix, limit, dictate, or make the future without a commitment to *causal* necessitarianism. … Such descriptions of determinism capture its basic commitment far better than causal determinism, and do so without any mention of causation."[ix]

This I think is not a persuasive tack. Even if we were to assume only an ostensibly non-causal version of determinism of the kind they recommend, we would still want to know what it is that accounts for the fact of there being a deterministic relationship between time *t* and time *t+n*. The only response that would by-pass the phenomenon of causation would be a claim to the effect that all times are co-present, and that what determinism describes is simply the fixed character of the total situation. And if we do respond in this way, then the original formulation of determinism in terms of temporal succession begins to make less sense. Instead of a definition of determinism, we wind up with a curious, non-standard iteration of eternalism.[x] As it happens, this is the view that Roy Bhaskar referred to as "actualism," which he took to be the implicit ontology of a Hume-styled empiricism.[xi] It is not that one couldn't endorse such a view. It's just that it is hard to see how it would combine with an anti-necessitarian powers ontology, an ontology in which some elements of what occurs or does not occur might be fixed by kind, but in which no token process of change can be guaranteed to occur naturally.

Mumford and Anjum argue as they do because they want to be able to defend determinism, if need be, whilst also defending the claim that causes do not necessitate their effects. It is also worth noting that their argument against necessitation does not hinge upon the nature of powers, in particular, as entities that imply a distinction between potential and actual. Rather, the claim is simply that it is impossible to do away with antidotes and interferers. I

don't think that re-defining determinism a-causally is plausible. But there is at least one element of the standard deterministic picture that a commitment to dispositional realism does not compel one either to endorse or reject, namely, the non-probabilistic law-statements that figure in our best natural scientific theories. (One may or may not believe in the further existence of laws themselves, in addition to according a role to law-statements.) From a dispositional realist perspective, true-law statements will be thought to be true in virtue of powers of a certain type. (Laws themselves, if one believes in them, will be grounded in those same powers.) "Grounded in powers" is a broad concept, and dispositional realists spell it out in different ways.[xii] But whatever the details, the powers-based determinist (I'll use the term "*p-*determinist*," as a reminder that the determinism in question is not the determinism of nomological necessitation) – the *p*-determinist will think that the powers of things are such that there are processes that can be described in terms of non-probabilistic lawful relations between causal *relata*. (And if she believes in the existence of laws themselves, and not just in the epistemic value of law-statements, she will be likely to conceptualize laws as the relations or processes that are either manifestations of powers or sustained by the manifestations of powers.) She may stipulate, as Roy Bhaskar did, that such processes do not occur naturally, that they must be artificially produced in the context of the closed system of an experiment. She may even add that an artificially closed system is not guaranteed to remain closed, and that insofar as the lawfulness exhibited therein is subject to interference, it is not really lawful. The point, however, is that she will be able to give a powers-based account of the element of standard determinism that is non-probabilistic law talk – even if she herself rejects such talk altogether.

Similarly, for a dispositional realist who defends indeterminism, p-indeterminacy will be thought to be a function of the natures of the powers of things. One might argue – as has E. J. Lowe, for example – that the human will is a power whereby agents spontaneously initiate change.[xiii] The existence of such a power or cluster of powers, a p-indeterminist could say, disrupts an otherwise p-deterministic order, i.e., one consisting only of the type of power that underwrites deterministic law-statements. And if one were precluded from appealing to the mental powers of agents by an independent commitment to a reductive physicalism, or if one thought that such an appeal somehow begged the question, one could point instead to the spontaneously expressed powers of physical entities such as electrons – as numerous powers theorists have also done, for other reasons, including Lowe. It might be tempting to think that dispositional realism actually *entails* a belief in free will. But a powers theorist who was a hard p-determinist would simply deny outright the existence of spontaneously expressed powers, including any thought to be had by human agents. Moreover, even if she were a p-*in*determinist, allowing for the spontaneous powers of electrons, a powers theorist who was a reductive physicalist would think (a) that it is bodies, not agents, that are the bearers of whatever powers exist; and (b) that the powers borne by bodies are physical properties, not emergent mental properties. Indeed, for this reason it is not clear that a powers version of reductive physicalism, even an indeterministic one, may be combined with a belief in the existence of distinctive power(s) borne by agents, the reality of which a compatibilist who was a dispositional realist would have to affirm. I will return to this point in section two.

But while a powers-based metaphysics may be shown to be consistent with aspects of determinism and indeterminism alike, the conclusion of that very analysis is that what

dispositional realism lends itself to most naturally is a ***non-determinist*** sublation of the terms. I have suggested above that the powers of some kinds of things may give rise to regular conjunctions of event.[xiv] Such powers sustain deterministic laws. Other kinds of powers, borne by other kinds of causal bearers, do not. Their expression, by contrast, is only ever probabilistic – or, in the case of intentional acts, one might want to say, not lawfully ordered at all. On this way of thinking, deterministic processes, probabilistic processes and free acts are all made true by the same underlying reality, namely one containing powerful particulars of different kinds, having qualitatively different kinds of causal powers. For the purposes of my own argument, the initial point is this: in allowing for such an account, dispositional realism provides what can be thought of as a dialectical resolution to the opposition between determinism and indeterminism. The position is non-deterministic, but it includes a "regional" determinism (i.e., it includes the type of power that underwrites the partial truth of determinism as a global claim, that partial truth being the fact that there seems to be a role for non-probabilistic law-statements to play in our best theories of what the world is like). At the same time, the position allows its proponents to presume that all events are caused, and caused in the same sense (i.e., by the exercise of powers), regardless of whether the process in question conforms to deterministic laws, to probabilistic laws, or to no laws.

In a moment I shall turn to the free will side of the problematic, but it should be immediately apparent that a powers-based metaphysics will do more than alter the structure of the determinism side of the construct. If nothing else, we can see that agency, from a dispositional realist perspective, will no longer have to be reconciled with either (a) standard nomological determinism; or (b) gaps in, or the suspension of, causation. Rather, the

dispositional realist is left only with the unexceptional fact that human beings are neither

omnipotent nor the only causal bearers on the scene. Our doings as agents occur in a field of

powers exercised by other powerful particulars, ranging from electrons to bacteria to the

international banking system. Some things have powers that can thwart our own, others do

not. Some – sugar, water, proteins, wood or stone, the sun – have powers that we need in order

to survive. To the extent that the problem at the heart of the Humean-inflected free will debate

is how to combine agency with causation, the dispositional realist response is that agency is the

name for the expression of a distinctive kind of causal power, one had by sentient substances.

There is nothing surprising about the fact, if it is one, that there are qualitatively different kinds

of powers, or that some are more complicated or remarkable or important to us than others. I

have elsewhere called the stance that I am describing (when it is combined with a view of

individuals as emergent, non-dualistic entities) "Aristotelian compatibilism," a label meant to

capture the idea that agency is indeed compatible with causation.[xv] But it could equally well be

described as a re-conceptualized agent-causal libertarianism, one that requires neither a notion

of a-causal agency nor the invocation of a special, *ad hoc* kind of causality. Whichever name one

prefers, however, what matters is that dispositional realism is a view from the perspective of

which it is possible to (a) make sense of each of the conceptual locations within the space of the

standard problematic; whilst (b) recognizing them to be partial and/or misconceived. Let

emphasize yet again, however, that the claim is not that the traditional problematic has been

solved according to its own rules; I do not wish to be misunderstood on this point.

   We can also see already that a powers-based perspective will undo any putative

contradiction between agency and the deliverances of science, i.e., between a scientific

understanding of ourselves and our pre-scientific, "manifest" self-image, as Willfred Sellars put it. Here the apparent conflict derives from the belief that causation amounts to the rule of law (or to the fact of order), and that therefore the aim of science is to identify laws (or *de facto* regularities). Call this a nomological conception of science. If one subscribes to such a view, then any account of agency according to which agents (rather than laws) are the determining source of their own actions will appear to fun afoul of the norms of scientific explanation. For it would seem, from such a perspective, that proponents of an agent-centered account are prepared to invoke the a-causal workings of some occult-like process in order to preserve our favored identity as self-legislating. This line of thinking gives an epistemic face to the metaphysical problem of uncaused free acts: free acts are not just random; they are in principle scientifically inexplicable. Libertarians, it follows, insofar as they celebrate the existence of such phenomena, are patently anti-scientific. The dispositional realist will reject the nomological account of the aim of science outright. Insofar as it is the powers of things that ground law-statements (and laws, if laws exist), she will say, it is the discovery of powers that is the fundamental aim of scientific inquiry. Dispositional realist philosophers of natural science tend to argue that such an account is descriptively superior to nomological alternatives. Nancy Cartwright and Brian Ellis, for example, have long advanced such a view. In the social sciences, where the practical commitment to Humean regularity theory is perhaps stronger than in the natural sciences, the dispositional realist's meta-claim may be a normative one, to the effect that the paucity of social science may be explained by its practitioners' efforts to isolate constant conjunctions rather than to identify causal powers.[xvi] In any case, the point is that the

dispositional realist will not recognize Sellars' science/agency dichotomy. Agency is a species of causal power, she will say, science the study of such powers generally.

(ii) <u>Powers and Free Will</u>

Let me turn now to the free will side of the problematic. The discussion of free will in analytic philosophy has come to involve, at a minimum, the following themes or terms: (1) being the cause of; (2) intelligibility, control or luck; (3) moral responsibility; (4) the possibility of having done otherwise; (5) acting for a reason; (6) psychic harmony, unity and/or authenticity; (7) being "fully" or "genuinely" free. There is extensive debate surrounding each of these points. My contention is that the adoption of a powers-based ontology has implications for how all of these issues are understood, as well as for how some inter-relate. Support for this claim is to be found at the level of the big picture (or at least the medium picture), rather than at the level of fine detail. I shall proceed, therefore, by outlining, at a degree of resolution designed to cut the issues mostly cleanly at their philosophical joints, what the dispositional realist will most naturally say in relation to each of the variables above.

(1) Being the cause of

Several powers-based theories of causation have been developed by contemporary philosophers, and there are appreciable differences between them. But as I've said, it's the broader contours that matter for present purposes. From a dispositional realist perspective, causal processes involve the display of a power or powers. To be the cause of an outcome is to be either the power(s) or the bearer of the power(s) expressed in any given causal process or kind of causal process. While a dispositional realist might hold that events, and not just

substances, are bearers of causal powers, the model can be said to be substance-causal rather than event-causal in the sense that a causation, from this perspective, is a matter of a "thing" of an allowable type (potentially including events) having actively produced (or co-produced) a change of some kind (or its powers having done so). The non-powers theorist does not conceptualize causation in generative terms at all. It is important to be very clear about this contrast. In "Compatibilism Without Frankfurt: Dispositional Analyses of Free Will," for example, Bernard Berofsky ostensibly considers the possibility that realism about causal powers could bolster what he calls "conditionalist compatibilism."[xvii] In so doing he explicitly references Stephen Mumford and Brian Ellis. Berofsky's conclusion is that it cannot. What is pertinent, however, is not the conclusion – nor Berofsky's offhand assertion that "if free will is a disposition, it is evidently not basic and would, therefore, more plausibly rest on some sort of causal basis"[xviii] – but rather the fact that, having contrasted realism about causal powers with conditional analyses, he then blithely glosses over the fundamental difference between them as accounts of causation. Indeed, the very notion of "some sort of causal basis" that he takes Mumford and Ellis-style agential powers to require, he presumes the dispositional realist may simply lift from Lewis.[xix]

     The conceptual effects of adopting a genuinely powers-based approach include the following. First, a powers-based account of causation allows efficacy to attach directly to the causal bearer, in this case (presumptively) an agent. The agent really is "the cause of." She is the cause not in virtue of somehow being the antecedent condition, but in virtue of being the bearer of the causal powers implicated in the production of the outcome. Thus causation and agential control do not come apart, for the dispositional realist, as they do for the standard

event-causal libertarian or compatibilist. The agent is not a link in a chain of events that is itself the site of causation. Nor is she connected in some to-be-specified way to phenomena that are either uncaused or only probabilistically caused. Rather, she just *is* the cause, in virtue of bearing the essential (and inessential) dispositional properties that she does. This much, of course, the dispositional realist shares with the agent-causalist who otherwise endorses non-productive event-causation. But – and this is a second point – the difference between them is that all causes are causes in the same sense, for the dispositional realist. In *all* cases, to be the cause of x is to be the powerful particular that brought x about, or that did so in concert with other causes.[xx] The fact that agents may be said to be causes follows straight-forwardly from the metaphysics of causation, for the dispositional realist; it is not a further thesis to be established.

Notice that these two points together yield a response to one type of objection to agent-causation, voiced here by Laura Ekstrom, viz., that even if we grant that an agent is the cause of x, the agent-causalist can't say what *caused* the agent to cause x (let alone to cause it when she did).[xxi] Here's Ekstrom: "But how can *I*, as a persisting entity, *make something happen* (or come to exist)? Normally, when something happens, something else happened previous to it to cause it to occur. … But *I* do not happen; I simply exist."[xxii] The dispositional realist will respond that the incredulity is unwarranted. It is, indeed, nothing other than persisting powerful particulars that make things happen (and perhaps also non-persisting ones). Not just in the case of agents, but generally. Agents have powers of consciousness, such that we are capable of making things happen in quite a sophisticated manner, but neither intentionality nor spontaneity are unique to us. Finally, the dispositional realist will not conflate the idea of "being the cause of" with that of moral culpability. Berofsky, who distinguishes the question of free will from that of moral

responsibility independently of any commitment to dispositional realism, puts this point nicely. He writes, "I believe that the free will problem as a problem generated by the prospect of determinism is a metaphysical problem. It cannot, therefore, be solved just by examining the concept of responsibility and the varied social and moral dimensions of agential evaluation."[xxiii] As I hope to show, many if not all of the considerations that, for the event-causalist (compatibilist and incompatibilist alike), end up doing the work that would otherwise be done by the account of causation will be seen, from a powers perspective, to have no bearing upon the core metaphysical question, which is whether or not a certain kind of causal power exists, arguably as an essential property of human beings.

(2) Intelligibility, Control or Luck

The dispositional realist does not face the so-called intelligibility problem, viz., the difficulty of showing how it can be that agents are able to influence or direct the causal processes in which they figure. I've elsewhere referred to this as the traction problem,[xxiv] and it also often comes under the headings of "luck" or "control." For obvious reasons, the problem is one that is faced by libertarians who hold that a free act has no cause at all. But it is also faced by compatibilists, and by those libertarians who hold that free acts are caused but only caused probabilistically. The compatibilist has to show that agents somehow have causal control over their acts even though their acts are deterministically caused by antecedent conditions plus the laws of nature. The libertarian who believes that free acts are probabilistically caused, meanwhile, faces challenges on both sides: on the one hand, she has to show that agents have control even in those cases in which the probabilistic regularity does ***not*** occur (i.e., during the exact gap in causation that presumably allows for free will); on the other hand, she too, like the

compatibilist, has to show that the agent has causal control even though the agent is not herself the cause. By contrast, the problem doesn't get started for the powers theorist. From a powers perspective, causation is not something that exists or occurs independently of the powerful particulars that bear the properties displayed in any given causal process. And lest one worry that this just pushes the problem back a frame (by introducing a causal relationship between the entity and its powers), the response to the concern is that the relationship between a powerful particular and its own essential dispositional properties not itself causal: it's constitutive (or categorical, as Mumford and Anjum put it, citing Kant).[xxv] Salt does not stand in a relationship of causal control over its power to melt ice. Rather, it just *has* the power, as part and parcel of its being salt. Human agents, unlike salt, have second-order powers, as a function of our first-order power of consciousness.[xxvi] And both our first and second-order powers afford us a type of control over what we do that salt does not enjoy. But, as with salt vis-à-vis the powers borne by members of *its* kind, members of our kind just *have* the power, if we do, to intentionally exercise or refrain from exercising our first-order powers. This said, the fact that control comes for free, as it were, entails neither that an agent will be able, in any given case, to exercise the powers that she chooses to exercise, nor, if she is so able, that she will succeed in bringing about any given outcome. But "control over" is not a problem about necessitation. Rather, it is a problem – *one not had by the powers theorist* - concerning either (a) (for indeterminist libertarians and for compatibilists) how to attach causation itself to agents; or, (b) (for the non-causal libertarian) how to connect agents to their uncaused acts. Note that the dispositional realist will be at a similar advantage in defending any position that trades upon the notion of source-hood (e.g., source incompatibilism).[xxvii]

(3) Moral responsibility

There is *prima facie* plausibility to the idea that being metaphysically free is a necessary condition for being blame- or credit-worthy. In discussions of this point, the focal question has become: "Is someone who could not have done otherwise morally responsible for her acts?"[xxviii] I address the issue of alternative possibilities in the next section. Here I want to look at what the dispositional realist will say about moral responsibility and free will, but I want to bracket the notion of having been able to do otherwise. Let me also distinguish between the task at hand and the far more comprehensive and substantive matter of considering what implications a powers ontology might have, if any, for the shape of moral philosophy more generally – and/or what a positive powers-based moral theory might look like.[xxix] I'm interested only in the narrow question of how the specific variables that I've identified will or should be parsed by the powers theorist.

There are three possible scenarios in relation to which, from a dispositional realist perspective, we may ask about the attribution of blame or credit, relative to specifically metaphysical concerns: first, one in which we assume that the agent, in virtue of her agential powers, has either caused or undertaken to cause a given outcome x; second, one in which we assume that the agent did *not* cause x (and didn't undertake to do so); third, one in which we assume a powers-based version of determinism. In the case of scenario (1), the powers theorist – as we've seen – will separate the question "Which powers were involved in the causal display that brought about x?" from the question "Who or what is morally responsible for x?" Unlike the Kantian, for instance, who will say that free will just *is* the capacity for ethical action, the dispositional realist will not conflate the phenomenon of causation with that of morality.

However, if a powers theorist *did* want to say that causing x renders an agent morally responsible for x, either as a rule or in a given case, the dissolution of the luck or traction problem would facilitate the ascription of credit or blame (inasmuch as it does away with the need to "attach" the act to the agent at the level of metaphysics). The nomological theorist, by contrast, may find herself in the position of saying that moral responsibility comes along with "being the cause of," whilst having residual difficulty fusing causation itself to agents. The issue that potentially emerges with respect to scenario (2), meanwhile, is transitivity. The dispositional realist will not be able to invoke the notion of an unbroken causal chain in order to establish that Agent A is an indirect cause of x. Instead, she will have to say that A's own powers played a role in producing x. I do not want to comment on whether or not a powers-based ontology therefore precludes a commitment to causal transitivity. At a minimum, it seems as though a powers-based transitivity would be punctuated – stopping and then starting afresh with each qualitatively different power, borne by each causally implicated powerful particular.[xxx] The need to re-conceive or even reject transitivity may set the bar higher for establishing instances of indirect causation, but it shouldn't prevent the dispositional realist from assigning credit or blame where either is thought due.

Scenario (3) is especially interesting. It will be difficult for the powers theorist who is a (powers-based) *p*-determinist to ascribe blame or credit to agents because it will be difficult for her to claim the *existence* of agents, as distinct from bodies. To defend determinism in a powers-based environment, recall, is to reject the existence of spontaneous powers, be they physical or mental. But a putative "agent" with no spontaneous powers would be gratuitous, ontologically; the powerful particular in question would have only and precisely the kinds of

powers had by bodies. Another way to put it would be to say that the powers theorist who is a determinist will have already answered, in the negative, the question of whether or not in addition to physical entities that bear only deterministic powers, there also exist powerful particulars who are agents, bearing non-deterministic powers. The same will hold at the level of properties. Non-emergent mental properties – i.e., mental powers that are, in the end, physical powers (be this via reduction, supervenience or function) – will show up as redundant on a dispositional realist ontological inventory, an implausible attempt to avoid bearing the cost of the ontological equation. The notion of a non-reductive but nonetheless deterministic mental property, meanwhile, will be hard to make sense of, from this perspective. What would such a power be a power to do? As I noted earlier, it is simply not at all clear that the dispositional realist can combine a belief in powerful particulars bearing distinctively agential powers with a belief in a powers-based causal determinism.

(4) The possibility of having done otherwise

If standard, nomological determinism is true, and at all times t there is only one possible future, then it looks as though, for reasons unrelated to her, an actor will never have been able to have done otherwise than as she did. And it seems plausible, as I've said, to think that someone who could not possibly have done otherwise is not morally responsible for her behavior. Harry Frankfurt's now-classic case of Jones #4, the hapless fellow who could not have done otherwise and yet appears to be morally responsible, was designed to avert such a conclusion by showing that moral responsibility does not, in fact, require alternative possibilities. There is an extensive, highly specialized literature on Frankfurt cases, but I want to stay focused on the big picture. The question that I want to pose is this: "What, if anything,

changes about Frankfurt cases, if we transpose them into a dispositional realist metaphysical register?" For simplicity's sake I will take Frankfurt's original version of the story as the basis for reflection. In Frankfurt's version, someone named Black wants someone named Jones to do x. But to quote Frankfurt, "he prefers to avoid showing his hand unnecessarily."[xxxi] Thus, so long as Jones is on course to choose to do x on his own, Black will not get involved. But if Jones (the fourth version of Jones in the account) should decide against doing x, Black is prepared to go to whatever lengths necessary in order to ensure that he, Jones, ends up doing x after all. We can fill in the blank as to how Black will pull this off, says Frankfurt. "Anyone with a theory concerning what 'could have done otherwise' means may answer this question for himself by describing whatever measures he would regard as sufficient to guarantee that, in the relevant sense, Jones4 cannot do otherwise."[xxxii] The only thing that matters is that Jones will, if it comes to it, be unable but to do x. As it happens, there is no need for Black to intervene. Jones does x all on his own. Therefore, says Frankfurt, Jones is morally responsible for having done x, even though in point of fact he could not have done otherwise.

A dispositional realist account of Jones' behavior is not hard to make out. Jones has, of his own accord, exercised his agential powers. If one thinks that agents are morally responsible for un-coerced displays of their causal powers, then there is no question but that Jones is responsible for his having done x. But what's going on in the counterfactual scenario? It cannot be the same powers of the same entity that are being expressed, because the role of the events depicted in the counterfactual scenario is to provide a fail-safe, relative to the properly agential powers of the actual Jones. Who, then – or what – bears the fail-safe powers that, if needed, will be exercised in the counterfactual context? Black does. Black is determined to bring about

Jones' doing of x. To be sure, counterfactual-Jones is also involved. But how? For the dispositional realist, the fact that counterfactual-Jones is not the author of the actions that are ostensibly his – else there'd be no fail-safe, relative to actual Jones – means that he lacks an essential power in virtue of which entities count as being agents, rather than as being some other kind of powerful particular.[xxxiii] Counterfactual-Jones isn't a non-conscious body, though. He lacks the defining powers of an agent, but he has powers that mere bodies (if there were such things) would not have. For one thing, he *believes* himself to have genuine agential powers. And he is an entity that is *capable* of having such a belief. Still, we know better. For again, if counterfactual-Jones were really in possession of agential powers, then actual-Black would have no back-up plan. Perhaps counterfactual-Jones is best conceived as being an extremely sophisticated tool, vis-à-vis both counterfactual-Black and actual-Black (both of whom, by contrast, bear unambiguously agential powers). The important point, however, is that from a dispositional realist perspective, the counterfactual scenario is superfluous. There is nothing to be learnt about Jones' moral culpability in acting as he does, and/or about his metaphysical standing as an agent, from knowing the degree of Black's determination to exercise his *own* agential powers in order to secure the end that he, Black, desires.

Admittedly, the gist of what I've just said has been claimed by non-powers theorists too, in the form of arguments related to causal histories and source-hood.[xxxiv] If counterfactual-Jones isn't really Jones, then even for the nomological event-causalist, the case isn't one in which Jones himself could not have done otherwise. What difference does it make, then, to adopt a powers-based perspective on Frankfurt cases? One answer is this: dispositional realism addresses concerns about causal history, identification and source-hood by default. Just as the

dispositional realist does not have to find a way to attach causation to entities in order to secure causal control, she doesn't have to perform an added genealogical operation in order to establish whether or not the powers of a given powerful particular are its own powers. Jones' powers *qua* agent are his necessarily; Black's are Black's. Given the requirements of the imagined scenario, counterfactual-Jones *can't* have the distinctive authorial powers of an agent, though he does have some powers. Also, once the Humean nomological theorist has sorted out the causal histories so as to establish that actual-Jones is not counterfactual-Jones, she will still have the attachment or control problem, and the powers theorist will not.

(5) Acting for a reason

The concept of acting for a reason enters the free will debate first as a response to the intelligibility problem. Carl Ginet, for example, suggests that because uncaused acts are explicable via reference to reasons, they are not random.[xxxv] Others have made similar arguments to the effect that free, *probabilistically* caused actions attach in the right way to agents because such actions are caused in whole or in part by the having of reasons.[xxxvi] Finally, Randolph Clarke has suggested that even a viable agent-causal theory would have to be augmented by an event-causal account of acting for reasons.[xxxvii] Of all of the issues on the free will side of the problematic, this one is perhaps most salient for the dispositional realist. I say this because cognition is clearly a core component of the power to spontaneously and intentionally exercise one's other powers. The concept of acting for a reason can therefore be expected to play an important role in any powers-based account of free will. Certainly this is so in the two leading versions published to date, those of Tim O'Connor and Jonathan Lowe.

O'Connor argues that agents cause intentions-to-do-x-for-reason-R (where reasons are defined in internalist terms).[xxxviii] Lowe has it that agents cause x by way of willing to do so, in response to reasons(s) R (where reasons are construed along externalist lines).[xxxix] Of course, in addition to such relatively fine-grained disagreements, variations in underlying powers-based ontologies will no doubt lead to broader variation in powers-based approaches to agency as more are developed. Ellis, for example, maintains that dispositional properties are the essences of what he calls dynamic universals, or process kinds. He also holds that human beings are the bearers of second-order, "meta-powers."[xl] A fully worked-out Ellis-style account of agency might well feature agency as the process kind, the dispositional essence of which is precisely the 2nd-order power that Ellis attributes to fully functioning human substances. Similarly, an elaborated Mumford and Anjum-style theory might include the claim that agential powers, like other causal powers, require manifestation partners. But all powers theorists will agree that the ability to reason is an essential agential power. Furthermore, they will also all part company with (a) event-causal libertarians who hold that reasons plus uncaused or only probabilistically caused events add up to agency; and (b) event-causal compatibilists who hold that free will can be defined non-causally, by reference to the presence or absence of certain kinds of motivating beliefs and/or desires or patterns thereof.

(6) Unity, hierarchy, harmony

Plato suggested that the person who is driven by appetites for things other than goodness is not free. The version of this idea that shows up in the contemporary analytic free will debate is the view that an agent enjoys free will if her internal psychological desire-

structure meets certain self-reflexive standards. Frankfurt, for a classic example, holds that an

agent has free will – in virtue of which she is an agent and not what Frankfurt calls a "wanton"

– insofar as she is able to "have the will [she] wants."[xli] Frankfurt expresses the idea terms of a

postulated hierarchy of desires: to act freely is to do that which is consistent with one's 2nd-order

desires concerning the content of one's first-order desires. Gary Watson refers to Plato

explicitly.[xlii] Watson contends that there is nothing special about numerically higher-order

desires in specifying the nature of free will. The issue is qualitative, he says. One acts freely

when one's actions are consistent with one's values, rather than with one's desires (if these

motivational systems should conflict). As in all areas of the literature, there are of course many,

many examples of this type of approach; I've cited just two that are well known. What becomes

of a concern with psychic harmony from a dispositional realist perspective? On the one hand:

nothing. While the powers theorist may be at an advantage in that she can talk in a realist way

about psychic forces or drives should she wish to, she will not be led by her metaphysics to

weigh in on the internal workings of the self. On the other hand: something, and for just the

same reason. From a powers perspective, none of these considerations pertain to the definition

of free will. To have free will, the dispositional realist will think, is to be the bearer of a certain

kind of causal power, viz., the power to intentionally undertake to express one's other powers.

Whether or not this sort of power exists (i.e, whether or not there is free will) is a different

matter altogether from what one does with it, or whether or not one experiences the potential

psychological turmoil unfortunately made possible by the having of it.

(7) Freedom

John Stuart Mill opens *On Liberty* with the stipulation that "[t]he subject of this Essay is not the so-called Liberty of the Will so unfortunately opposed to the misnamed doctrine of Philosophical Necessity; but Civil, or Social Liberty."[xliii] I have argued elsewhere that in fact it is not possible to draw a neat line between social and political philosophy and metaphysics.[xliv] Still, Mill is right that the free will question and the social-political freedom question have different objects. The metaphysical question concerns the fate of agency, given the fact of causal determination. What we post-Aristotelians really want to know, if we're honest about it, is whether or not agency as we experience it is actually *possible* in the face of causation, once the latter has been conceived in terms of a coercive nomological order, rather than in terms of activity. The social-political question, by contrast, has to do with a particular kind of situation in which powerful particulars who are endowed with agential powers may or may not find themselves. One aspect of the social-political question involves specifying the features of the circumstances in question. What are the essential characteristics of a historical context that would qualify it to be counted as free? Or, if one prefers, to be counted as allowing for the freedom of agents located therein? Some contend that it is absence of impediment. Others maintain that it is the ability of those in such an environment to realize personal and/or collective aspirations. Isaiah Berlin, who may or may not have accurately portrayed Mill's own position, gives us the terms "negative" and "positive" liberty, respectively, to pick out these alternatives as general types of response. The other aspect of the social-political question is whether or not freedom at this level presupposes any *other* social-political state(s) of affairs as a condition of its possibility – or any psychological one(s), for that matter. Answers tend to vary directly: the more robust the conception of freedom, the more will be thought to be required in

order for it to obtain. Indeed, one who already held a positive conception of freedom might think that what I've parsed as requisites are not pre-conditions at all, but simply additional constitutive features.

The metaphysical question and the social-political question(s) are indeed related, though, even if they are not the same. At a minimum, any account of freedom at the social-political level will presuppose the metaphysics necessary to sustain it. Some combinations of social-political theory and metaphysics will be ruled out. Others will be logically possible, but lack coherence. The proponent of negative liberty, for example, has various options. She could be a (standard) determinist: the fixed order of the world, she would say, just happens to include both a given agent's deterministically caused desire for x, and the fact of there being no impediment to her pursuing it. She could also be a standard compatibilist, though if she were the sort of compatibilist who maintains that metaphysical freedom just *is* the absence of constraint relative to the pursuit of desired ends, she would have to say that agents who lack the freedom to do as they like are thereby stripped of free will.[xlv] Or she could be a metaphysical libertarian, insisting that it is only metaphysically unconstrained agents who stand to enjoy social-political freedom as she has defined it. Certainly, one can easily imagine the negative political libertarian judging a deterministic causal order to be an impediment. But other possible combinations make less sense. The concept of positive liberty does not logically preclude a commitment to (standard) hard determinism or to (standard) compatibilism, but of the available Humean-inflected positions, it sits most comfortably with standard metaphysical libertarianism. Just as she rejects the idea that one is free regardless of how limited one's opportunities are (so long as nothing stands in one's way), a proponent of positive liberty will

be unlikely to think that an agent may be counted as genuinely self-determining if she is free to do and to desire only that which has been determined for her by laws of nature and antecedent conditions.

The question for my present purposes is whether or not any of this changes if one adopts a powers ontology. As before, the answer is yes and no. On the one hand, a powers-based metaphysics entails neither a negative nor a positive conception of freedom. In principle, the powers theorist can adopt either position. On the other hand, entailment is not the only test. If we think comprehensively about the dispositional realist approach, including that which it throws into relief, a number of implications follow as a matter of good sense, if not logic. One point to appreciate is that both the event-causal compatibilist and the event-causal libertarian are primed to conceive of political freedom in negative terms, even if they are not compelled to do so. The compatibilist will find it easy to think that there is no need for her to embellish upon her metaphysical conception: to be free is to be not-coerced, period. The libertarian, meanwhile, has already gone a step further. In her view, to be metaphysically free is to be not-even-coerced-by-causation. And for her too it will be easy to retain the core idea thereof, viz., that freedom is tantamount to lack of impediment. A non-powers perspective thus inclines its proponents towards negative conception of liberty, even though it does not require it.

Second, we've seen that the dispositional realist conceives of causation as a matter of things displaying their powers. What will be of interest with respect to human beings, from this perspective – whether or not we call it freedom – is the exercising of our own powers, including our uniquely self-reflexive powers. Now, as I've said, the dispositional realist is not required to believe that any such power or powers exist. It is open to her to be a (powers-based) physicalist

and/or a (powers-based) *p*-determinist. But if she does believe that human beings have agential powers – a capacity for self-conscious self-determination, we might say – then any discussion that it *would* make sense to call a discussion of freedom will likely center on the cultivation and expression thereof. And will the dispositional realist be in a position to say something different about a human capacity for self-conscious self-determination than the non-powers theorist? Yes. At the most basic level, the capacity in question (followers of Nussbaum might use the term "capability") will be thought to be a real power or cluster of powers, something that, in virtue of its reality, really can be either fostered or thwarted. By contrast, unless she is an agent-causalist, the non-powers theorist will hold that what appears to be a "power" is in fact a sequence of states of affairs. Moreover, as argued in section 2, such real powers will be un-problematically attributable to agents as their own. Finally, and perhaps most notable, the contrast between positive and negative liberty will not be a sharp one, from this perspective. In fact, we might say that it, too, is sublated. In both the positive and the negative models, what is of interest is the efficacy of the agent. The disagreement concerns only the placement of a particular normative marker – a bar that distinguishes "mere" human efficacy from human flourishing. Should it be set low, at the absence of constraint? Or higher, so as to take in enabling conditions and/or the achievement of any specified outcome(s)? Thus, while it is true that a defense of free will and an account of social-political freedom are responses to different questions, the dispositional realist, unlike the non-powers thinker, will regard discussions of socio-political freedom as tracking the same power of self-determination that gives content to metaphysical freedom.

I argued early on that a powers-based metaphysics sublates the determinism side of the free will problematic by re-casting nomological regularity as an epiphenomenal product of powers – some of which sustain deterministic laws, others of which sustain only probabilistic laws and still others of which arguably produce no laws at all. I also suggested that one could already see how such an ontology might sublate the entire problematic. Having looked now at the free will side, we may add that realism about causal powers (a) resolves important problems faced by event-causal defenders of free will; (b) reveals a range of non-causal formulations of free will to be digressions; and (c) simultaneously (i) clarifies the difference between the concept of free will and that of social-political freedom; and (ii) blurs the distinction between positive and negative liberty by connecting both to the power(s) of self-determination. But we are also better able now to appreciate the way in which adopting a dispositional realist stance radically reconfigures the debate as a whole. To reiterate what I said at the close of part 1, it's not just that some powers generate an appearance of determinism but others don't. It's also that free will, from this perspective, *just is causal determination*: the greater the degree of causal determination (by the agent), the greater the degree of freedom.

(iii) Conclusion: Powers and Agent-Causation

All proponents of agent-causation are in a position to say at least some of the things about agency that the dispositional realist can say. It will be important, therefore, by way of conclusion, to identify the specific epistemic gain associated with a comprehensive powers-based approach. But let me be clear about what I mean to count as an agent-causal view. I do not mean a view such as that proposed by Laura Ekstrom, for example, who holds that "the

agent-causation of an intention is … an ontologically and conceptually *reducible* notion."[xlvi]

Ekstrom summarizes her position as follows:

> *Theory Type 3d (T-3d Theories)*: An action is free only if it results, by a
> normal causal process, from a pertinent intention (e.g., an intention to
> perform that act here and now) that is *caused by the agent*, where this latter
> term (*'caused by the agent'*) is reducible to event-causal terms.[xlvii]

We are presented here with italicized talk of agents doing the causing, but given her default

neo-Humean understanding of "normal causal process," and given her explicit equation of

agent-causation with event-causation, we can see that Ekstrom's thesis is actually this: an action

is free only if it results, via **an event causal process**, from a pertinent intention that is itself the

result of **an event-causal process**. The example is instructive, though. When I observe that the

proponent of an otherwise-Humean agent-causal account is able to say much of what the

dispositional realist can say, I have in mind the kind of position associated with Roderick

Chisholm, for example – one in which it is assumed both (a) that agents are substances; and (b)

that agents are productive causes; but also (c) that in all other situations, causation consists of

regular sequences of event rather than in the display of real powers borne by substances. This

"hybrid" model, as I shall call it, is the one that is tacitly assumed by those who reject agent-

causation on the grounds that it posits a mysterious, "not-normal" kind of causation,

supposedly operating along-side the regular, Humean kind.

   The question, then, is: how does the hybrid model of agent-causation compare to a

comprehensive powers-based model? Exactly which lines of argument open to the

dispositional realist are available to the neo-Humean who makes an exception for agents?

Clearly there is some overlap. Especially, if it is true that agent-causation resolves issues of

control, source-hood and the like, than any agent-causalist will be better able to handle the whole set of traction problems than will the event-causal libertarian. It will be enough to think that agents, at any rate, have real causal powers – even if nothing else does. As soon as one undertakes to defend such powers, though, the hybrid agent-causalist's underlying neo-Humean metaphysics will matter. I have argued elsewhere that a loosely Aristotelian powers-based metaphysics allows one to meet the challenge to non-reductive physicalism posed by Jaegwon Kim, in particular the problem of over-determination that follows if one grants the causal closure of the physical.[xlviii] It's a challenge that really does have to be met by any proponent of agent-causation, because if the mental powers attributed to agents turn out to be redundant vis-à-vis law-governed sequences of physical states, then we are back to event-causation. The non-dualist, hylomorphic ontology that permits a response to Kim involves more than a comprehensive commitment to powers, and I won't reproduce my argument here, but the upshot is that a dispositional realist metaphysics can help to establish the existence of conscious physical substances such as human agents: integrated entities that escape Kim's conceptual net. The hybrid agent-causalist can assert that agents are efficacious, but because she is a Humean except with respect to agency, she is not optimally equipped to call into question Kim's over-all apparatus.

A similar case can be made that the event-causal Humean who makes an allowance for agent-causation will be at a disadvantage in responding to someone such as Randolph Clarke. Clarke argues persuasively that event-causal libertarians cannot deal with control and luck issues, but he rejects agent-causation in the end because it presumes substance causation. Consider the following series of excerpts from "Alternatives for Libertarians"[xlix]:

> To clarify, suppose we take for granted a view of events on which a typical event is an object's o's possessing a property P at a time t (Kim 1976). The object o is a constituent of the event, as are the property P and the time t. … Now suppose that properties are what ground casual powers. Suppose that some property P grounds a power to cause an effect of a certain sort. Imagine that a certain substance s comes to possess P, and that until s acquires P the chance of the effect in question is very low. The occurrence of the event s's acquiring P, or the obtaining of the state of affairs s's possessing P, will typically raise the chance of the effect's subsequence occurrence. There is nothing of this sort left for the substance s to do; the event or state of affairs takes care of it![l]

Take the idea that an object's possessing a property at a time constitutes an event. And for heuristic purposes, let's think about it from the perspective of Brian Ellis. Ellis has recently come to the view that substances are themselves a species of process (a revision not relevant here), but he has heretofore endorsed an ontology comprised of three different kinds of universal: substance-kinds; event- or process-kinds; and property-kinds.[li] A particular event is an instance of a dynamic universal (i.e., a process-kind). But dynamic universals are themselves natural kinds of causal displays. Events are thus irreducibly active; they are "doings," essentially constituted by expressions of real causal powers. That a substance may have this or that property p at time t (or at all times, if it is an essential or even just persistent property of the substance) is not itself an event, from this perspective; it's just a fact about that substance.[lii]

Let's continue. "Now suppose," says Clarke, "that properties are what ground casual powers. Suppose that some property P grounds a power to cause an effect of a certain sort." Here let's invoke Mumford. Properties just **are** causal powers, as Mumford has it. From a dispositional realist perspective, then, Clarke is asking us to suppose the existence of a power, R. (I use R rather than P because the powers theorist will not necessarily agree that a power must be grounded by some further property, and it is the power that we are tracking.) So far so

good. Next comes: "Imagine that a certain substance *s* comes to possess *P*, and that until *s*

acquires *P* the chance of the effect in question is very low." Now, if one thinks that all

properties are powers, and if one thinks that substances have identity conditions, then one will

think that at least some of the powers had by substances are had by them essentially. Clarke's

power *R* is not essential to *s*'s being *s*, or *s* would already have it. Thus, from a dispositional

realist perspective, what we are being asked to imagine is that substance *s* has acquired a new,

non-essential power. Finally: "The occurrence of the event s's acquiring P, or the obtaining of

the state of affairs s's possessing P, will typically raise the chance of the effect's subsequence

occurrence." From which Clarke concludes: "There is nothing of this sort left for the substance

s to do; the even or state of affairs takes care of it!" I am not going to enter into the debate

between dispositional realists and Humeans about what causation is, or how it works. But even

from the sidelines we can see that Clarke's argument for event-causation presumes event-

causation from the outset. Insofar as *s*'s acquiring a (non-essential) power *R* makes it be more

likely that the sort of outcome caused by the display or manifestation of *R* will happen, a

substance-causal powers theorist will not explain the situation in the way that Clarke does. In

fact, her conclusion will be precisely the opposite of his. She will not conclude that there is

nothing left for substance *s* to do. Rather, she will conclude that *s*, having gained an additional

power *R*, is now even more causally efficacious than it was before. Of course, the fact that the

powers theorist will say this does not settle the dispute about the nature of causation. But it

shows that Clarke has not settled it either. He has simply asserted that causation is as the event-

causalist believes it to be. And the point is that the hybrid agent-causalist is not in a position to

respond to such an assertion, since she too believes that causation as such is event-causal. I

should add that there is also an advantage had by the powers theorist that is not subtle at all.

Specifically, the otherwise-Humean agent-causal theorist is clearly vulnerable to the objection

noted above regarding the introduction of a second, non-standard type of causality that applies

only to agents. Clarke raises this objection along with the one I've been discussing, and he is

hardly alone in doing so. The dispositional realist avoids the problem altogether. She claims

only that many different kinds of substance exist, bearing many different kinds of causal

power(s).[liii]

   Above all, the hybrid model leaves the free will problematic intact, whereas a

comprehensive powers-based ontology stands to both (a) make true and (b) reveal as partial all

of the global claims that figure therein. As we saw in part 1, dispositional realism sustains what

is true about determinism and indeterminism alike. When we add in the analysis of part 2, we

see exactly how, in addition to underwriting agent-causation, a powers-based ontology also

sustains what is true about compatibilism (viz., that agency is not at odds with causation) and

what is true about libertarianism (viz., that agents with free will have the ability to initiate

causal processes). If this set of deliverances doesn't amount to a reconfiguration the free will

problematic, it's hard to know what would.

Notes

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[i] For the purpose of this discussion, the term dispositional realist refers only to those who define "power" in such a way that realism about powers implies (a) a commitment to anti-passivism; and (b) that powers sustain causation. A position such as that defended Alexander Bird (e.g., *Nature's Metaphysics: Laws and Properties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) is not meant to be taken in by the term. For more on the distinction between Bird's passivism and the stance more commonly adopted by powers theorists, see

Ruth Groff, "Whose Powers? Which Agency?" in Ruth Groff and John Greco (eds.), *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy: The New Aristotelianism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013).

ii See, especially: Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Humanities Press: Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: 1978) and more recently Stephen Mumford and Rani Lill Anjum, *Getting Causes from Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

iii Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Causes from Powers*.

iv Note that a particular causal bearer may have dispositional properties that do not figure in its kind-essence. See Anjan Chakravartty,"Inessential Aristotle: Powers Without Essences," in (ed.) Ruth Groff, *Revitalizing Causality: Realism About Causality in Philosophy and Social Science* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008).

v Proponents of agent causation don't **have** to hold that agent causation is a special type of causation. Thomas Reid, and Aristotle before him, did not think this; nor do contemporary dispositional realists such as E. J, Lowe and Tim O'Connor. Still, most often – and standard amongst detractors – agent causal theories are interjected into a default, non-powers metaphysical framework, one in which causation as such is presumed to be event-causation. I have discussed this point at some length in Ruth Groff, *Ontology Revisited: Metaphysics in Social and Political Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), chapter 5. Even Chisholm felt the need at the end of his career to subsume agent-causation into event-causation. See: "Agents, Causes, and Events: The Problem of Free Will," in (ed.) Timothy O'Connor, *Agents, Causes, and Events* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

vi David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [Reprinted from the Original Edition in three volumes and edited with an Analytical index by L. A. Selby-Bigge] (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), Book II, Part III Section I. Hume writes: "I define necessity two ways, conformable to the two definitions of *cause*, of which it makes an essential part. I place it either in the constant union and conjunction of like objects, or in the inference of the mind from one to the other." p. 409. This same "necessity" holds relative to our actions, Hume says, as confirmed, if need be, by an observer thereof. p. 408.

vii Kai Nielsen, "The Compatibility of Freedom and Determinism," in (ed.), Robert Kane, *Free Will* (Malden MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 42.

viii Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Causes From Powers*, p. 75.

ix *Ibid.*, pp.75-76.

x Thanks to Alexander Bird, Irem Kurtsal-Steen and Mark Steen for useful conversation about this point. The view expressed in solely my own.

xi Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*; see esp., chapter 2, section 1, p. 67.

xii For an excellent book-length treatment of laws and powers, see Mumford, *Laws in Nature*. Mumford holds that it is powers that exist, not laws, and that law-statements are superfluous given that it is powers that do the explanatory work. See also *Op. Cit.*, Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*. For interesting historical perspective on the issue, see William Ott, *Causation & Laws of Nature in Early Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

xiii E. J. Lowe, *Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See also, "The Will as a Rational Free Power," in *Op. Cit.*, (eds.) Groff and Greco, *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy*. Timothy O'Connor defends a broadly similar view.

xiv *Op. Cit.*, Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*.

xv Op. Cit., Groff, *Ontology Revisited*.

xvi For a very recent, pointed example see Tony Lawson, "Emergence and Social Causation," in *Op. Cit.*, (eds.) Groff and Greco, *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy*. But see also *Op. Cit.*, Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, and voluminous subsequent critical realist literature building on Bhaskar's work.

xvii Richard Berofsky, "Compatibilism Without Frankfurt: Dispositional Analyses of Free Will," in (ed.) Robert Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will, 2nd edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

xviii *Ibid.*, p. 159.

xix *Ibid.*

xx Or one might want to say that it is powers themselves that are causes proper, rather than the bearers thereof. Mumford and Anjum hold this view.

xxi The parenthetical concern prompts Randolph Clarke to say that a satisfactory agent-causal view would have to be supplemented by an account of the agent being event-causally caused to act at time t by the holding of reasons. Laura Waddell Ekstrom, *Free Will: A Philosophical Study* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).

xxii Ibid., p. 97.

xxiii *Op. Cit.*, Berofsky, "Compatibilism Without Frankfurt," p. 154.

xxiv *Op. Cit.* Groff, *Ontology Revisited*, chapter 5.

xxv *Op. Cit.*, Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Powers from Causes*, p. 163-164. Mumford and Anjum thank Johan Arnt Myrstad for the reference to Kant.

xxvi The way that I've articulated this is influenced by Brian Ellis. See, especially, *The Philosophy of Nature: A Guide to the New Essentialism* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002). But see also *Op. Cit.* Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*.

xxvii For an interesting canvassing of different iterations of source incompatibilism, see Neal A. Tognazzini, "Understanding Source Incompatibilism," *The Modern Schoolman*, Volume 88, Issue 1/2.

xxviii John Martin Fischer, for example, holds that an agent who could not have done otherwise does not have free will, but nevertheless is morally culpable for his or her actions. See John Martin Fischer, "Frankfurt-Style Compatibilism," in (ed.) Gary Watson, *Free Will, 2nd edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

xxix As an example of the former, see Rani Lill Anjum, Svein Anders Noer Lie, Stephen Mumford, "Dispositions and Ethics" in *Op. Cit.*, (eds.) Groff and Greco, *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy*; an example of the latter is Brian Ellis, *Social Humanism: A New Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2012).

xxx For a discussion of transitivity from a powers-based perspective, see *Op. Cit.*, Mumford and Anjum, *Getting Powers from Causes*, ch. 7.

xxxi Harry Frankfurt "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," in *Op. Cit.*, (ed.) Watson, *Free Will, 2nd ed.*, p. 172.

xxxii *Ibid.*, p. 173.

xxxiii Compare this way of cutting into the issue to that taken by Neil Levy (who argues against Fischer and Mark Ravizza that the counterfactual "intervener" in Frankfurt-style cases cannot be bracketed) in "Counterfactual Intervention and Agents' Capacities," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Volume CV, Number 5, May 2008. Levy's argument turns upon the idea that if we are prepared to say that an agent may *gain* powers in virtue of acting as part of an agential "ensemble" with an intervener, then is no reason to think that a line can be drawn between agent and context (including intervener) in the case in which a power is lost. The approach that I've taken, apart from being efficient, does not require any sort of extension of boundaries for agents. Neither, and perhaps more important, does it conflate the issue of what it takes to be morally responsible with the issue of which powers are essential to being the kind of powerful particular that one might think human beings are. That is, we can avoid argument about whether or not the mental states that figure into counterfactual-Jones' behavior are such that a quasi-human agent of the type counterfactual Jones is imagined to be may be considered morally responsible for his acts. It is sufficient to show that actual Jones has the agential powers distinctive of human agents, whilst counterfactual-Jones does not – or else the case would fail.

xxxiv For an excellent over-view of this literature, see: Kevin Timpe, "Causal History Matters, But Not For Individuation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 39, Number 1, March 2009, 77-92.

xxxv Carl Ginet, "Reasons Explanation of Action: An Incompatibilist Account," in *Op. Cit.*, (ed.) O'Connor, *Agents, Causes and Events*.

xxxvi See, e.g., Robert Kane, "Two Kinds of Incompatibilism," in *Op. Cit.*, (ed.) O'Connor, *Agents, Causes and Events* and "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism," in *Op. Cit.*, (ed.) Watson, *Free Will, 2ⁿᵈ ed.*

xxxvii See, e.g., Randolph Clarke, "Alternatives for Libertarians," in *Op. Cit.* (ed.) Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will, 2ⁿᵈ ed.* for concise statement of the need for "co-determination."

xxxviii Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

xxxix *Op. Cit.*, Lowe, *Personal Agency*.

xl *Op. Cit.*, Ellis, *The Philosophy of Nature*. See also "The Power of Agency" in *Op. Cit.*, (eds.) Groff and Greco, *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy*.

xli Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," in *Op. Cit.*, (ed.) Watson, *Free Will, 2ⁿᵈ ed.*, p. 331.

xlii Gary Watson, "Free Agency," in *Op. Cit.*, (ed.) Watson, *Free Will, 2ⁿᵈ ed.*

xliii John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* in *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 85.

xliv *Op. Cit.*, Groff, *Ontology Revisited*.

xlv For a wonderful statement of this point see Rogers Albritton's 1985 Presidential Address to the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, published as "Freedom of Will and Freedom of Action" and re-printed in *Op. Cit.* (ed.) Watson, *Free Will, 2ⁿᵈ ed.*

xlvi *Op. Cit.*, Ekstrom, *Free Will*, p. 114.

xlvii *Ibid.*, p. 115.

xlviii *Op. Cit.*, Groff, *Ontology Revisited*.

xlix *Op. Cit.*, Clarke, "Alternatives for Libertarians."

l *Ibid.*, pp. 345-46.

li *Op. Cit.*, Ellis, *Scientific Essentialism*. For his most recent process account of substances, see Brian Ellis, *The Metaphysics of Scientific Realism* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 2009.

lii Thanks to Alexander Bird for conversation about this point. The view expressed is solely my own.

liii *Op. Cit.* Groff, *Ontology Revisited.*

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