**The Disappearing Agent Argument and the Power to Settle**

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**1. Presuppositions**

*Causation and Agency*

* 4 kinds of causes : event vs substance, deterministic vs indeterministic
* 3 forms of libertarianism : event-causal, agent-causal, non-causal
* Reductionism and wide DAA for agency

*Three arguments from luck against libertarianism*

* No Enhanced Control Argument
* Present Luck Argument

G : S’s agent-causing A at t

“The substance-causal relation is embedded in event G, and thus G will not be what is most fundamentally caused. The agent-causal libertarian maintains that the crucial control is not exercised by way of events that precede G, but by the agent-as-substance. If in addition to the events that precede G we hold fixed in W and W\* the agent-as-substance’s exercise of her agent-causal power, G will occur in W and not in W\*, but only because the agent-as-substance causes the action A in W but not in W\*. For this reason, it isn’t a matter of responsibility-undermining luck that G occurs in W.” (14)

G’ : E event-causing A at t

The *event*-causal relation is embedded in event *G’*, and thus *G*’ will not be what is most fundamentally caused. The *event*-causal libertarian maintains that the crucial control is not exercised by way of events that precede *G*’, but by *by at least one of the agent-involving-events E that realizes the compatibilist conditions for freedom* (rather than identification). If in addition to the events that precede *G*’ we hold fixed in W and W\* the *mental agent-involving events relevant for action* (let us say E and E\*), *G*’ will occur in W and not in W\*, but only because *E* causes the action A in W but not in W\*. For this reason, it isn’t a matter of responsibility-undermining luck that *G’* occurs in W

* The (narrow) Disappearing Agent Argument (concerning freedom – against ECL)

“Suppose that a decision is made in a deliberative context in which the agent’s moral motivations favor deciding to A, her prudential motivations favor her deciding to not-A, and the strengths of these motivations are in equipoise. A and not-A are the options she is considering. The potentially causally relevant events thus render the occurrence of each of these decisions equiprobable. But then the potentially causally relevant events do not settle which decision occurs, that is, whether the decision to A or the decision to not-A occurs. Since, given event-causal libertarianism, only events are causally relevant, *nothing* settles which decision occurs. Thus it can’t be the agent or anything about the agent that settles which decision occurs, and she therefore lacks the control required for moral responsibility for it.” (cf. Pereboom 2004, 2014, 2017)

*Settling as causing*

* Steward :
* epistemological settling: closes off alternative (epistemically) possible answers
* metaphysical settling: closes off alternative (metaphysical) possibilities
* *Agency Incompatibilism* :

If there is ever any settling of matters in time, then universal determinism cannot be true, since according to universal determinism, everything is already settled at the start (whatever exactly we are to understand by ‘the start’). (Steward 2012 : 42)

* Pereboom : causal account of settling, without alternative possibilities as a necessary condition (Frankfurt’s cases endorsed)

“An agent settles which option for action occurs just in case she determines, not necessarily causally, which action occurs, and she makes the difference as to which action occurs.” (p. 4)

* (S-EC) An agent settles whether an action occurs if it is caused by certain reasons of hers, where the absence of those reasons would not have caused that action.
* (S-AC) An agent settles whether an action occurs if she agent-causes it for certain reasons, where the absence of her agent-causing the action for those reasons would not have caused that action.

**2. The balance between ECL and ACL in front of the DAA**

*The objection to Pereboom*

Main objection: Pereboom seems to require from the Event-Causalist that the agent, and so the mental events, be able to settle his action *before* the action (decision).

Clarke’s proposal :

(MS) If nothing prior to t settles whether S decides at t to A, and if S decides at t to A, then the making of that decision by S at t settles at t whether that decision is made then; and

(AS) If nothing prior to t settles whether S decides at t to A, and if S decides at t to A, then S, in making that decision, settles at t whether that decision is made then

*Pereboom’s explanation*

* *control*requires some *causal* relation, and the decision being made does not *cause* the decision making, or the decision’s occurrence, it is *identical* with it.
* not open to the EC to say that the agent is the cause, since the agent reduces to some other and prior events being the cause (metaphysics vs ordinary talk).
* in a state of equipoise the decision A brought about by events E1-E2, might not have been brought about, and an opposite decision B would have been by other events and states E3-E4

Before t : E1-E2 --->A At t : E1-E2 —> A

E3-E4 --->B E3-E4 –x->(B)

The mental events (E1-E2) cause, but don’t settle whether A occurs. Why ?

NB : E1-E2 determine causally A at t1 and make a difference : their mere absence would not have caused A

**Suggestion 1**: AC can and EC cannot account for the fact that

1. the settler *preexists* to the settled and independently of the settling
2. it is the the *agent as a whole* who is in control at the moment of decision, not in EC
3. it is the *same* cause-settler (S) that causes/settles the actual decision (A) and that might have caused/settled the alternative decision

**Suggestion 2**: The settling factor (of action A) is what causes the *causing A to occur at t1*,

* according to AC, the settling factor might well be the agent, who causes not only the action A, but her own causing A
* according to EC : the decision is identical to *the S-involving events causing A*, and events do not cause their causing something : they just cause other events. But :

“S can exercise control over action A by virtue of S-involving events causing A. *S’s deciding to A at t1* would in such cases be identical to the complex event *S-involving events causing A at t1*. In causing A at t1, the S-involving events bring about, and thus cause, the event *S-involving events causing A at t1*, which is *S’s deciding to A at t1*. However, given motivational equipoise, the S-involving events don’t settle whether A occurs, and thus don’t settle whether the decision to A occurs.”

+ contrastive causation by E1-E2 vs S + PLA

**Suggestion 3 :** The *power* to decide.

* An event is not the appropriate subject for a power (Lowe 2008) Would a bundle of events be ?
* The power to decide would reduce to two powers (?), the power of E1-E2 to produce A, and the power of E3-E4 to produce B. And it would be indeterminate which of the two sets will win, until the very moment of the decision : PLA.

**3. Repairing the Disappearing Agent Argument : an alternative view of Agent Causation**

*The dual power of freedom : rational power*

…all arts, i.e. all productive forms of knowledge, are potentialities; they are principles of change in another thing or in the artist himself considered as other. And each of those which are accompanied by reason is alike capable of contrary effects, but one non-rational power produces one effect; e.g. the hot is capable only of heating, but the medical art can produce both disease and health. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IX, 2)

* intellectual capacity or will as *potentia ad opposita* (Duns Scotus)
* vs natural power : oriented towards one effect, triggered by some circumstance

*Alternative accounts*

* Different account of **Agent Causation**: special power of the agent
* Different account of **Settling**: implies leeway

**Agent-Causal Settling** supposes a dual (rational) power to determine which of different options will be actual – Against the Causal Theory of Action

* Different account of **Control**: control supposes more than settling, it supposes a power to cause one way or the other according to the circumstances
* Different account of **self-determination**: the agent does not *control* her decision, through her dual power, but *the decision is an act of controlling* (one’s thoughts, body, instruments, etc.), the *exercise* of the dual power, not *what* this power is power *over*

*Recapitulation*

* **deterministic substance-causation** (acid) : causal (natural) power, but does not settle, nor control. What about substance-causation determined by the nature of the substance ?
* **indeterministic substance-involving event-causation**(particle’s emission from an atom) : it *settles* the issue, but: *causal power* or possibility ?
* **indeterministic substance-causation**: Anscombe’s stone
* **double indeterministic event-causation**: ECL (cf. Kane’s model). Sets of mental states E1-E2, E3-E4 : the set that causes the decision settles the decision, but nothing settles that
* **agent-causation proper**: exertion of the dual power of freedom, self-determination, S settles whether A or B occurs – the exertion of the dual power itself is not *under* S’s control, it *is* S’s control

Non-causal account ?

*The DAA repaired*

Same critic of ECL + Advantage of ACL : the agent (directly), fundamentally as a substance, *settles* whether she performs A by *causing* it and *controlling* it through the (actual or possible) exercise of her *dual power* to perform or to refrain from the decision to do it

**Conclusion**

1) Back to the two other forms of the Luck problem :

* *No Enhanced Control*: indeterminism does enhance control for AC, since it is required for the very exercise of the dual power
* *Present Luck*: indetermination is due to the dual power (vs EC indeterminism = brute fact)

2) Libertarianism and causation : contra-causal freedom – freedom causality

3) Verbal solution ? dormitive virtue without inner mechanism (dual power vs natural power)

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