
Rethinking Compatibilist Agent-Causation: Motivations and Misgivings

Jonathon Hawkins*¹

¹University of Leeds – Royaume-Uni

Résumé

Word Count: 298 / 300 (excluding references).

This talk will begin by briefly outlining the motivation for a compatibilist agent-causal theory, suggesting that compatibilism's success could depend on it. Having done so, its main focus will be to argue that current versions of compatibilist agent-causation fall short and require further work. It will finish by providing the groundwork for a more persuasive formulation of the view.

In providing this motivation, I will build on the work of Markosian (2012), arguing that:

- i. Agent-causationists would do well to show that their view holds even if determinism is true.
- ii. For compatibilists, agent-causal theories are best positioned to overcome their most common challenges (including that presented in Van Inwagen, 1983), along with a novel problem presented in this talk.

I will then examine three current compatibilist agent-causal theories, from Markosian (1999); Nelkin (2011); and Franklin (2016), providing reasons to reject them. I shall argue that they:

- (a) fail to account for the intuitive attributes of genuine free will and moral responsibility;
- (b) beg the question against the libertarian on definitions of 'determinism'; and
- (c) implausibly treat free actions as 'events' (which results in issues similar to those in event-causal libertarian views).

This talk will build on these motivations and shortcomings to lay the foundation for an alternative view. In doing so, it will discuss how agents play a meaningful role in their actions when determinism is true; justify a particular definition of 'determinism' (to avoid or minimise begging the question); and argue that free actions, from an agent-causal perspective, may best be understood as ongoing processes rather than isolated events.

Given its length, this talk is not as ambitious as to persuade listeners of one form of compatibilist agent-causation. Instead, it will highlight why such theories warrant further exploration, offering some promising thoughts on rethinking current versions.

*Intervenant

References

Franklin, C E, 2016, If Anyone Should Be an Agent-Causalist, then Everyone Should Be an Agent-Causalist, in *Mind*, vol. 125.

Markosian, N, 1999, A Compatibilist Version of the Theory of Agent Causation, in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 80.

Markosian, N, 2012, Agent-Causation as the Solution to all the Compatibilist's Problems, in *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 157.

Nelkin, D, 2011, A Compatibilist Account of Agent-Causation, in *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility*, Oxford Academic.

Van Inwagen, P, 1983, *An Essay on Free Will*, Oxford University Press.

Mots-Clés: Compatibilism, Philosophy of Action, Agent Causation, Non Causal Theories of Action.