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abstract for 'Limitations of Power'

An ontology of powers—essentially dispositional natural properties—has recently become popular, and consequently philosophers have sought to apply this ontology to a number of problems and areas outside fundamental metaphysics. In this paper I warn against over-extending the case for a powers ontology. While many areas in philosophy may benefit from being discussed in terms of dispositions, this does not translate into an argument for powers, since a non-powers account of dispositions is always available. Conversely a powers ontology cannot answer typical questions outside fundamental metaphysics, for example concerning the analysis of causal statements. I suggest that proposals that attempt to do this suffer from a conflation of 'power' and 'disposition' or from an abuse of metaphor.