

## Aristotelian powers at work: reciprocity without symmetry in causation

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This paper puts powers to work by developing a broadly Aristotelian account of causation, built around the fundamental idea that *causation is the activation of powers*. What is distinctive about the view is that it takes the activation of a causal power to be the exercise of that power, i.e. an *activity* or process.

On this view, powers depend for their activation on the activation of their mutual partner-powers. Because of their mutual dependence for activation, partner-powers manifest themselves in activities that are *co-determined, co-varying, and co-extensive in time*. Thus, on this account there is *reciprocity* in causation.

Consider the causal scenario when A causes B to become hotter. On the account I am proposing what is transpiring is that A's power to heat is activated; its manifestation is *heating* B up. But this can take place only if B's power to be heated is activated too and manifests itself in B's getting hotter. A's heating and B's being heated are mutually dependent in a variety of ways and each activity lasts as long as the other lasts.

By developing an account of causation as the activation of causal partner-powers, the paper argues for a realist theory of causation that does *not* reify the interaction of the causal partners into a relation.

That causation is the mutual activation of causal powers is a view that is gaining consensus in contemporary power metaphysics. However, there is an important feature to causation that is left out in views of this kind, namely *agency*; and its omission leaves important metaphysical work undone. My Aristotelian analysis of the interaction between mutually manifesting causal powers is different from others advanced in the contemporary debate, in that it does justice to the intuition that there is *agency* in causation. I draw a distinction between causal agent and patient, associating agency with what brings about change and patiency with what changes.

As I will argue in the paper, the distinction between agent and patient in causation is pivotal to offering a metaphysical account for another important intuition about causation: that causation has a direction, and is thus *asymmetric*.

The bedrock position this paper advances is this: on the assumption (which I have argued for elsewhere) that all properties at the fundamental level of reality are causal powers, the view of reality that my account of powers motivates is that of a network of interdependent processes. These processes are activated powers, that is, powers exercising or manifesting themselves. But not all powers that exist in nature exist as activated; this network of interdependent processes

grounds further powers which exist in potentiality, that is, as powers that are fully real and powerful, but not yet manifesting.

The paper discussed all the aforementioned topics by engaging with John Heil's paper 'Causings', forthcoming in Jonathan Jacobs (ed.) *Putting Powers to Work* (in preparation).