

## Freedom with Causation

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Our actions have causes, some of which are entirely beyond our control. Of that there can be no serious doubt. Some worry that this fact undermines the commonsense view that we perform free actions for which we are morally responsible.<sup>1</sup> My aim in this article is to show that such worries are unfounded. It may be, as incompatibilists believe, that *deterministic* causation of an action by factors beyond the agent's control precludes something that is essential to free action and moral responsibility, such as the power to do otherwise or being the ultimate source of one's actions. But by itself, apart from the assumption that determinism is true, the fact that our actions have causes, some of which are beyond our control, poses no threat to our freedom or responsibility.

### I

Worries about free and responsible agency of the sort I'm concerned to deflect in this article often stem from a commitment to what I'll call a *pure* non-causal theory of free action. Non-causal theories of free agency are those according to which free actions needn't have any causes whatsoever. Some views of this kind allow for the possibility of free actions being caused. Others, though, go farther, claiming that free actions, or some subset thereof (e.g., those that are "directly" or "non-derivatively" free), must be entirely uncaused.<sup>2</sup> These are the pure non-causal views. It's worth noting here at the outset that the central thesis of this essay, that free action and moral responsibility aren't at odds with the fact that our actions have at least some causes beyond

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<sup>1</sup> See Ginet (2007) for a recent expression of this worry. The worry arises for anyone who holds what I call below a *pure* non-causal theory of free action, i.e., a theory according to which (directly) free actions must be uncaused. Ginet (2007), McCann (1998), and Stump (1999), among others, advocate theories that sort.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Clarke (2003, p. 17).

our control, isn't established by extant objections to non-causal theories. Moreover, my argument in defense of that thesis won't presuppose that those objections are cogent.

A basic objection to all non-causal theories of free action begins with the observation that actions are events of a very special kind. But what is it that distinguishes actions from other events? One popular answer appeals to causal histories. According to familiar causal theories of action, part of what makes an event an action of some agent is that it is caused in a certain way by the agent's mental states (e.g., his beliefs, desires, and intentions).<sup>3</sup> But if that is what distinguishes actions from other events, free actions obviously couldn't be completely uncaused.

A related but importantly different objection begins with the observation that free actions are typically performed for reasons. But what is it to perform an action *A* for reason *R*? Part of a familiar answer is that *R*, or the agent's apprehension of *R*, is among the causes of the agent's *A*-ing.<sup>4</sup> Proponents of non-causal theories of free agency predictably eschew this familiar causal answer in favor of a various non-causal accounts of reasons explanations of action. However, it is a matter of considerable controversy whether any of these non-causal accounts are viable.

Yet another objection to non-causal theories begins with the observation that to act freely is to exercise an especially valuable form of control over one's behavior. However, some find it difficult to see how an individual could exercise control over something that was uncaused. So, even if uncaused actions are possible, and even if there is an adequate non-causal account of acting for reasons, it might still seem mysterious how an uncaused event could be a *free* action.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Davidson (1963) advances a causal theory of this sort and numerous others have followed suit. Variants of this standard causal theory appeal to causation by neural realizers of an agent's mental states, or to causation by facts about the agent's mental states, rather than to causation by the mental states themselves. See Mele (2013) for a discussion of these variants.

<sup>4</sup> This view is most often associated with Davidson (1963), and, like the more basic causal theory of action of which it's a natural part, has been appropriated and refined by numerous others since.

<sup>5</sup> See Clarke (2003, pp. 19-21) for an objection along these lines.

Each of the objections just adumbrated pose significant challenges for non-causal theories of free agency. However, none of them undermines the claim that actions with causes can't be free actions. At most they show that events without causes can't be free actions. But to show that our actions having causes, some of which are beyond our control, poses no threat to free and responsible agency, it won't do to show that actions without causes can't be free. We must show, rather, that an action can be a free action for which its agent is morally responsible, even if it was caused in part by factors beyond the agent's control, a task to which I now turn.<sup>6</sup>

## II

Consider Nigel, a poll worker in a local election. Though not the most scrupulous individual, Nigel would never tamper with an election just to ensure that his preferred candidate wins. He believes in the democratic process too much. However, Nigel might be willing to tamper with an election, if he were offered a substantial bribe, especially if this would help his preferred candidate get elected. Nigel believes in the democratic process, to be sure, but he also believes in having a healthy bank account. Suspecting that Nigel might be susceptible to a bribe, Clive, an operative of the Democratic Party, offers Nigel a substantial sum to rig the election in favor of the Democratic candidate, which, coincidentally, is the very candidate for whom Nigel was planning to vote. At first, Nigel is unsure of what to do. After all, election fraud is a serious offense, and there would be some risk of his getting caught were he to accede to the arrangement. In the end, though, Nigel decides to accept the offer and to rig the election for the Democratic candidate.

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<sup>6</sup> I'll assume in what follows that free action is possible. But this assumption isn't necessary. If free action isn't possible, my thesis can be understood as the claim that our actions having at least some causes beyond our control isn't itself among the considerations that establish the impossibility of free action.

If there are uncaused actions, Nigel's decision to rig the election for the Democratic candidate isn't one of them. Among its causes, I'll argue, is Clive's act of bribing Nigel. That Clive's action is among the causes of Nigel's decision is suggested by the presence of several causal indicators, relations indicative of a causal connection between two events.<sup>7</sup>

Effects often counterfactually depend on their causes, cases of preemption being notable exceptions. Effects also typically counterfactually vary with their causes; i.e., had the cause been slightly different, the effect would have been relevantly different as well. Causes generally increase the probability of their effects in the following way: the probability that the effect would occur given the cause was higher than the probability of the effect's occurring would have been if, holding everything else fixed, the cause hadn't occurred. Causes also explain their effects and are a means to their effects. While some of these causal indicators aren't necessary conditions for causation, their joint presence strongly suggests a causal connection between two events. We would expect them all to be present in ordinary cases of causation (e.g., those not involving preemption), but would expect few, if any, to be present in cases in which two events are causally independent of one another. As it happens, they are all present in the story about Nigel.

Consider, first, counterfactual dependence. Given Nigel's respect for the democratic process, he would never have decided to rig the election unless he were offered a substantial sum in return, and no one else was waiting in the wings to bribe him had Clive failed to do so. Nigel's decision to rig the election thus obviously counterfactually depends on Clive's bribing him; if Clive hadn't offered Nigel the money, Nigel wouldn't have decided to rig the election.

Consider, next, counterfactual variance. The content of Nigel's decision clearly counterfactually varies with the content of Clive's offer. If Clive had made a different offer—if,

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Schaffer (2000, pp. 166-170), who appeals to causal indicators in arguing for the possibility of trumping preemption, and Mellor (1995, pp. 58-66), who appeals to them in arguing for the possibility of indeterministic causation.

for example, he had offered Nigel money to fix the election for the Republican Party's candidate instead—Nigel presumably wouldn't have decided to rig it for the Democrats. He would either have decided not to rig the election, or he would have decided to rig it for the Republicans.

Consider also the relationship between causation and probabilities. Given Nigel's commitment to the democratic process, it's safe to say that the probability of his deciding to rig the election in the absence of a bribe was close to zero. So, as long as no one else was waiting in the wings to offer Nigel a bribe if Clive failed to do so, Clive's offer undoubtedly raised the probability that Nigel would decide to rig the election. While it may not have *ensured* that Nigel would decide as he did, it presumably did make the decision to rig the election more likely than it would have been if, holding everything else fixed, Clive hadn't offered Nigel the bribe.

Clive's offer also helps explain Nigel's decision to rig the election for the Democratic candidate. If someone asked why Nigel decided as he did, especially given his well-known commitment to the democratic process, a good answer to the question would surely make reference to the fact that Clive offered Nigel a substantial sum to fix the election.

Finally, Clive's offer was clearly a means to the end of getting Nigel to decide to rig the election for the Democratic candidate. If the Democratic candidate wanted to get Nigel to (decide to) rig the election in her favor, one among several ways of doing so would be to have her assistant, Clive, offer Nigel a bribe, which, we may imagine, is exactly what she did.

It's thus quite plausible that Clive's action is among the causes of Nigel's decision to rig the election for the Democratic candidate. Now, let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that Nigel had no control over whether Clive offered him the bribe. Does all this mean that Nigel didn't freely decide to rig the election or that he isn't morally responsible for deciding as he did?

It isn't obvious that it does. The fact that Clive's offer is among the causes of Nigel's decision is compatible with the assumption that, in deciding as he did, Nigel exhibited a number of basic features that, while not all individually necessary, are members of a collection of jointly sufficient conditions for free action and moral responsibility. For instance, it's compatible with Nigel being a normal, sane, morally competent, fully informed, uncoerced agent, who was suitably responsive to reasons, and who has and regularly exercises powers of self-control. Moreover, as I'll argue in more detail momentarily, the fact that Clive's offer is among the causes of Nigel's decision is also compatible with Nigel having it within his power at the time to do otherwise than decide to rig the election, and with his being in an important sense "ultimately responsible" for his decision. But if Nigel had the basic agential features just mentioned, and if he could have refrained from deciding as he did, and if he is indeed ultimately responsible for his decision, there would seem to be little reason to doubt that he made the decision freely and that he bears at least some moral responsibility for it. I conclude that Nigel's decision to rig the election may have been a free action of his for which he can be morally responsible, the fact that among its causes was an event over which he had no control notwithstanding.

### III

I'll consider some objections to this claim and to my argument for it shortly. But first, I should like to pause briefly to shore up certain aspects of the argument. In particular, I should like to elaborate on and further defend my claim that, at and leading up to the time of decision, Nigel may very well have satisfied a number of crucial conditions for free action and moral responsibility, even though his decision was caused in part by circumstances beyond his control. My claim that the etiology of Nigel's decision is compatible with his satisfying a number of

basic elements of a collection of jointly sufficient conditions for free action and moral responsibility, such as being sane, morally competent, well informed, suitably responsive to reasons, and so on, is perhaps not especially controversial. However, my claim that the causal history of Nigel's action is compatible with his having the power at the time to do otherwise and with his being ultimately responsible for what he did merits further attention.

Consider, first, the power to do otherwise. An agent who performed an action *A* had it within his power to do otherwise than *A* provided he had both the ability and the opportunity to avoid *A*-ing. That *A* was caused in part by prior states and events over which the agent had no control is thus compatible with the agent having it within his power to do otherwise than *A* if and only if it's compatible with the agent having both the ability and the opportunity to avoid *A*-ing. As I'll now argue, we have every reason to think that an agent can have both the ability and the opportunity to avoid *A*-ing, and thus that it can be within the agent's power to avoid *A*-ing, even if circumstances over which the agent had no control are among the causes of his *A*-ing.

An agent can retain an ability to perform an action even in cases in which prior states and events *ensure* that he won't exercise that ability. For example, by locking a proficient swimmer in an empty room for an hour, I may ensure that the swimmer won't swim during that period of time. However, I wouldn't thereby divest him of his ability to swim. He retains that ability even though circumstances obtain that prevent him from exercising it. Given this fact, it's plausible to think that an agent's having the ability to do something other than what he actually did is compatible with his behavior being caused in part by prior states and events.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Matters are complicated somewhat by the fact that there may be different kinds of abilities. For instance, Mele (2006, p. 18) distinguishes between general and specific abilities. Mele would say that the swimmer in my example retains a general ability to swim, where this is understood as having certain capacities and skills, though he lacks a specific ability to swim, i.e., the ability to exercise the relevant capacities and skills in his actual circumstances. For those who distinguish between different kinds of ability, my claim is that an agent may possess a general ability (to use Mele's terminology) to do otherwise, even if prior causes ensure that he won't exercise it.

An agent's having the opportunity to do otherwise is also compatible with his behavior being caused by prior states and events. To see this, return to our example. Nigel did give serious consideration to playing it safe and rejecting Clive's offer, and there doesn't seem to have been anything preventing him from making a different decision than the one he actually made. There weren't any obvious barriers to Nigel making a different decision; no nefarious neurosurgeons or peremptory puppeteers were waiting in the wings to ensure that he decided as he did, he didn't suffer from any mental illnesses that would compel him to do what he did, etc. Moreover, we may suppose that it wasn't determined in advance that Nigel would decide to rig the election. That is, we may suppose that it was consistent with the past and laws of nature that he make a different decision than the one he in fact made. We thus seem to have every reason to suppose that Nigel had the opportunity to do otherwise than decide to rig the election for the Democratic candidate, despite the fact that his actual decision to do so was caused by prior states and events.

Having the power to avoid performing an action is compatible with the action being caused in part by preexisting circumstances. That Nigel's decision was caused in part by Clive's offer therefore isn't at odds with its being within Nigel's power at the time to decide otherwise.

Let's turn now to ultimate responsibility. Some incompatibilists about freedom and determinism insist that for an action to be up to its agent in the sense required for free action and genuine, desert-entailing moral responsibility, the agent must be the ultimate source of, and must be ultimately responsible for, that action in a way he couldn't be if determinism were true.<sup>9</sup> Now, there's a way of understanding this proposed ultimacy condition according to which it requires that nothing for which the agent isn't responsible be among the causes of the agent's behavior.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See, in particular, Kane (1996). Compatibilists too might insist that free and responsible agency requires being in some sense the source of our actions, though they will, of course, insist that this doesn't require the falsity of determinism. For a discussion of this issue from a compatibilist perspective, see Fischer (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Klein (1990, p. 51) and Stump (1999, p. 414).

Understood in this way, though, the condition is the very point at issue. There is, however, another way of understanding the condition according to which what's required is that the agent be a self-determining source of his behavior in the sense that nothing external to him and beyond his control settles in advance which intentional actions he will perform.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that an agent's conduct was caused in part by circumstances beyond the agent's control is compatible with the agent being self-determined in this sense and thus with his being ultimately responsible for his behavior. Nowadays it's widely agreed that causation needn't be deterministic. One state or event can be among the causes of another without determining it, and even when all the causes of an outcome have been enumerated, it still needn't be the case that they jointly determine that outcome.<sup>12</sup> We can see this by again briefly considering the relation between Clive's offer and Nigel's decision. We have supposed that Clive's offering Nigel the money didn't ensure, and thus didn't determine, that Nigel would decide as he did. More generally, we have supposed that it was consistent with the past up to the time of decision and the laws of nature that Nigel makes a different decision. It therefore wasn't determined in advance that Nigel would decide to rig the election for the Democratic candidate. But this observation doesn't diminish the force of the earlier argument that Clive's offer is among the causes of Nigel's decision, since all the features of the scenario indicating a causal relation between these two events obtain regardless of whether Nigel's decision was predetermined by antecedent circumstances. So, while Nigel's decision wasn't uncaused, nothing for which he isn't responsible settled in advance what he would do. There is, then, a sense in which Nigel determined for himself what he would do and is ultimately responsible for the decision he made.

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<sup>11</sup> This is, roughly, how Kane understands the ultimacy condition. See, e.g., Kane (1996, p. 35).

<sup>12</sup> Defenses of non-deterministic causation abound. See Anscombe (1981), Mellor (1995 ch. 5), and van Inwagen (1983, pp. 138-140) for a sampling. The remarks that follow are reminiscent of Mellor's defense of indeterministic causation.

Nigel, we may suppose, had it within his power at the time to do otherwise than decide to rig the election for the Democratic candidate, and he is ultimately responsible, in the sense just identified, for his decision. But if it was within his power to decide differently, and if he is ultimately responsible for his decision, then given our background assumption that Nigel is a sane, morally competent individual, who is responsive to reasons, has ordinary powers of self control, and who knew at the time what he was doing and that it was unethical, there seems to be no reason to doubt that Nigel's decision was a free action for which he can be morally responsible, despite the fact that it was caused in part by an event over which he had no control.

#### IV

“Causation,” says Ned Hall (2004, p. 225), “understood as a relation between events, comes in at least two basic and fundamentally different varieties,” dependence and production. The dependence relation “is simply...counterfactual dependence between wholly distinct events,” whereas the production relation is instantiated when one event “helps to generate or bring about or produce” another. According to Hall, dependence and production typically go together, which helps to explain why we often fail to distinguish them. They can, however, come apart. There can be production without dependence, for example. Assuming this is right, it could be objected that my argument establishes at most that it's possible for there to be free actions that causally *depend* on antecedent states and events over which agents have no control, but that the argument doesn't establish the further claim that it's possible for there to be free actions that are causally *produced* by antecedent circumstances over which agents have no control. It's clear, for example, that Nigel's decision to rig the election causally depends on Clive's having offered him the bribe, and that, even so, Nigel may have made the decision freely and may be responsible for

it. It's less clear, however, that Clive's having offered the bribe is among the circumstances that causally produces Nigel's decisions, and even less clear that the decision could still be a free decision for which Nigel bears some moral responsibility had it been causally produced, even indeterministically, by factors beyond Nigel's control. What to make of this objection?<sup>13</sup>

Before answering the question, it's worth pointing out that even if the objection were successful, the resulting position would still be significant. If, as I have argued, we can perform free actions that causally depend on antecedent states and events that are beyond our control, then our commonsense view of ourselves as free agents who are morally responsible for some of our behavior needn't be disturbed by the fact that our actions are without a doubt causally dependent on numerous circumstances, many of which are entirely beyond our control.

That said, I don't think the objection succeeds. If there are indeed two fundamentally different kinds of causation, as Hall contends, I believe my arguments are applicable to both. An agent can satisfy the jointly sufficient conditions for free action identified at the end of section two, even if his action causally depends in part on circumstances beyond his control, and even if those circumstances are among the things that indeterministically produce his action.

To see this, suppose that an agent *S* performs some action *A*, and that *S*'s *A*-ing was indeterministically caused (i.e., produced) in part by some prior event *c* over which *S* had no control. This fact is compatible with *S* being a normal, sane, morally competent, fully informed, uncoerced agent, who was suitably responsive to reasons at the time, and who has and regularly exercises powers of self-control. It's also compatible with *S* having it within his power to avoid *A*-ing, for reasons outlined in section three, and with *S* being ultimately responsible for his behavior, in the sense that nothing for which *S* isn't responsible settled in advance whether *S* would *A*. But if *S* is indeed a normal, sane, morally competent, fully informed, uncoerced agent,

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<sup>13</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this objection and pressing me to address it.

who is suitably responsive to reasons, has and regularly exercises powers of self-control, had it within his power at the time to avoid *A*-ing, and is ultimately responsible (in the relevant incompatibilist sense) for *A*-ing, there would seem to be little reason to doubt that *S* freely *A*-ed and that *S* may bear at least some moral responsibility for *A*-ing, despite the fact that *A* was causally produced in part by an event over which *S* had no control.

A slight variation of our story about Nigel illustrates these claims. Everything is the same as in the original version of the story, except this time let's imagine that someone else was waiting in the wings to offer Nigel the bribe in the event that Clive failed to offer it. In this version of the story, Clive's offer is arguably still among the causes of Nigel's decision, despite the fact that the decision doesn't counterfactually depend on that offer. Clive's offer still makes the decision to rig the election more likely than it would have been if, holding everything else fixed, including the non-occurrence of the counterfactual bribe, Clive hadn't offered Nigel the bribe. The offer is still a means to the end of getting Nigel to make a decision to rig the election, and the fact that Clive made the offer still helps to explain why Nigel decided as he did. In short, it's still true that Nigel decided as he did in part *because* Clive bribed him. These observations suggest that, in both versions of the story, Clive's offer is among the circumstances that causally produce Nigel's decision. But given our assumption that nothing causally *determined* that Nigel would decide as he did, I see no reason to suppose that this fact itself is inconsistent with the claim that Nigel made his decision freely and is at least partly to blame for it.

## V

Perhaps, though, a reason isn't far to seek. Carl Ginet doubts whether it's "possible for there to be an action that was indeterministically caused by an antecedent event and also such that it was

up to the agent at the time of the action whether that action would be caused by that antecedent event” (2007 p. 252).<sup>14</sup> If Ginet’s doubts on this matter are well founded, it could spell trouble for the position defended in this article. If an agent’s actions are caused by antecedent events, and if, as Ginet contends, this entails that it wasn’t up to the agent at the time of action whether those antecedent events cause his actions, it’s difficult to see how it could nevertheless be partly up to the agent at the time of action whether he behaves as he does. On the basis of these reflections, Ginet concludes that actions caused by antecedent circumstances beyond the agent’s control aren’t up to the agent (p. 254), and, presumably, if our actions aren’t even partly up to us, they aren’t free actions for which we deserve praise, blame, punishment, or reward.

Whereas Ginet doubts the possibility of there being an action that was indeterministically caused by an antecedent event and also such that it was up to the agent at the time of the action whether that action would be caused by that event, I think this is entirely possible. A bit more precisely, I think that an action can be indeterministically caused by antecedent states and events and, even so, that it can be partly up to the agent at or immediately prior to the time of action whether those states and events are among the causes of his action. And, I believe this is so regardless of whether it’s causal dependence or causal production that’s at issue.

Suppose one event  $c$  indeterministically causes a second event  $e$  that isn’t deterministically caused by anything else. I suggest that it was partly up to an agent whether  $c$  caused  $e$ , if there was something the agent could have done (i.e., had it within his power to do) to prevent  $e$  but not  $c$ .<sup>15</sup> Reflection on the following example supports this suggestion.

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<sup>14</sup> See O’Connor (2000, p. 29) and van Inwagen (1983, p. 149) for similar worries.

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise noted, claims about what an agent “could” have done or “can” do should be understood as claims about what it’s within the agent’s power to do. I shall also be focusing solely on intentional actions, things agents do meaning to do them, the likely consequences of which the agent is fully aware.

Earl shoots Barney in the leg, severing his femoral artery, an event that indeterministically causes Barney's death by exsanguination an hour or so later. Let  $s$  stand for the shooting and  $d$  for the death. Barney's surgeon (a sane, rational, uncoerced, fully informed agent) couldn't have prevented  $s$ , but it was within her power to save Barney's life, thereby preventing  $d$ . All she had to do was send him to surgery post-haste, which she could have done. For some reason, though, she elected not to do this. (Barney, a self-important busybody if there ever was one, isn't very well liked in the community, a fact that perhaps accounts for the surgeon's otherwise inexplicable refusal to save his life.) In this case,  $s$  is among the causes of  $d$ . The latter event clearly depends on the former, and the former is just as clearly among the circumstances that produce the latter.<sup>16</sup> And yet, it seems that it was partly up to the surgeon whether  $s$  caused  $d$ , insofar as there was something she could have done to prevent  $d$  but not  $s$ .

Here's another illustration of the point, one in which the preventable event is an intentional action. Zachary likes silly dancing, but is mortified by the prospect of doing it in public. However, he has just ingested a drug known to indeterministically cause people to do silly dances. There is, an antidote that, if taken within five minutes of ingesting the drug, will counteract the drug's effects. Zachary has procured this antidote and could easily take it straightaway. However, given his fondness for silly dances, and hoping that the drug will enable him to overcome his fear of dancing in public, he decides not to take the antidote. Several

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<sup>16</sup> The dependence claim is clear enough, but some might resist the claim about causal production. This worry can be circumvented by considering a variant of the case. Everything is the same as in the original version, except that if Earl hadn't shot Barney in the leg, someone else would have. In this version of the story, Barney would still have died of exsanguination due to a gunshot wound to the leg, had Earl not shot him. Thus, his death by exsanguination doesn't counterfactually depend on Earl's act of shooting him. Clearly, though, Earl's action is still a cause of Barney's death, even though the death doesn't depend, in this version of the story, on the shooting. The death occurs in this version of the story in part (but only in part) because of the shooting; the shooting is among the circumstances that causally produces or brings about the death. These observations support my judgment that, in the original version of the story, Earl's act of shooting Barney is part of what produces Barney's death.

moments later the drug takes effect and, as a result, Zachary begins to do a ridiculous little jig for all to see.

Here again one event (the ingesting of the drug) indeterministically causes another (the dancing of a jig). The second event clearly depends on the first; had Zachary not taken the drug, he almost certainly wouldn't have danced a silly jig in public. Moreover, his taking the drug is also clearly among the circumstances that produce his dancing. And yet, it was partly up to Zachary whether his ingesting the drug caused his dancing, insofar as there was something he could have done intentionally to prevent the dancing (viz., take the antidote) that wouldn't have prevented him from ingesting the drug.

Reflection on cases like these supports my claim that, when one event  $c$  indeterministically causes (produces) a second event  $e$  that isn't deterministically caused by anything else, it was partly up to an agent whether  $c$  caused  $e$ , if there was something the agent could have done to prevent  $e$  but not  $c$ . Bearing this claim in mind, let's return one last time to the story about Nigel and his unethical decision to rig the election for the Democratic candidate.

Earlier I argued that Nigel (a sane, morally competent individual, who is responsive to reasons, has ordinary powers of self control, and was well informed of the facts relevant to the situation) is ultimately responsible for the decision he made at  $t$  to rig the election, and that he had it within his power at or immediately prior to  $t$  to decide instead at  $t$  not to rig the election, the fact that his decision was indeterministically caused by an earlier event over which he had no control notwithstanding. Now, if Nigel had decided instead at  $t$  not to rig the election, this presumably would have prevented the actual decision he made at  $t$  to rig the election, but would have had no impact on whether Clive had earlier offered him the bribe. Evidently, then, it was partly up to Nigel at or immediately prior to the time of action whether the offer caused the

decision he made at  $t$  to rig the election, as there was something he could have done instead at  $t$  that would have prevented his actual decision but wouldn't have prevented Clive from offering him the bribe. So here we seem to have a case in which an action was indeterministically caused by an antecedent event and, even so, it was partly up to the agent at or immediately prior to the time of action whether that event was among the causes of his action. Moreover, given that Nigel satisfied a collection of jointly sufficient conditions for free action and moral responsibility, it's plausible that it was up to him, in a sense relevant to whether he acted freely and is morally responsible for his decision, whether his action was caused by Clive's offer.

## VI

Our behavior is causally influenced (even if not deterministically caused) by an array of factors over which we have little or no control, many of which we are only now beginning to identify. I have argued that by itself this fact doesn't pose a significant challenge to our commonsense belief that we sometimes perform free actions for which we are morally responsible. This is because the causation of action per se by prior states and events, including those that are beyond our control, isn't inimical to key features of free agency, such as rationality, self-determination, and the power to do otherwise. There may, of course, be good reasons to doubt that we are free and responsible agents, reasons that appeal to notions like causal determinism, or luck, or the alleged causal inefficacy of consciousness in action initiation. But the fact that our actions have causes, some of which are beyond our control, isn't one of them.

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