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Reasons-Sensitivity, Causes and Counterfactuals

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RESUMEN

En su libro *Causation and Free Will,* Carolina Sartorio ha desarrollado una concepción de secuencia real del libre albedrío en términos de sensibilidad a razones. En este artículo, intento caracterizar la concepción de Sartorio y distinguirla de otras propuestas. Tras ello, suscito algunos problemas de la misma. En primer lugar, sostengo que la tesis según la cual las ausencias pueden ser causas es altamente problemática; en segundo lugar, mantengo que, si los contrafácticos no son explicativamente fundamentales, como Sartorio sostiene, tampoco parecen serlo las causas reales; en tercer lugar, defiendo que la libertad y la sensibilidad a razones parecen descansar en propiedades y estructuras no causales. Finalmente, sostengo que los argumentos de Sartorio a favor de la tesis según la cual la responsabilidad moral no se basa exclusivamente en causas reales se aplican asimismo al libre albedrío.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *teorías de la secuencia real, libre albedrío, causación, capacidad de respuesta a razones, compatibilismo*.

ABSTRACT

In her book *Causation and Free Will,* Carolina Sartorio has developed an actual-sequence account of free will in terms of sensitivity to reasons. In this paper, I try to give a sense of Sartorio's account and to distinguish it from other proposals on offer. After that, I bring to light some problems of her view. I argue, first, that Sartorio's thesis that absences can be causes is highly contentious; second, I hold that, if counterfactuals are not explanatorily fundamental, as she defends, actual causes do not seem to be so, either; third, I contend that freedom and reasons-sensitivity seem to rest on non-causal properties and structures. Finally, I hold that Sartorio's arguments for the view that moral responsibility is not exclusively grounded in actual causes apply to free will as well.

KEYWORDS: *Actual-Sequence Theories, Free Will, Causation, Reasons-Responsiveness, Compatibilism*.

So-called "Frankfurt cases" have led many philosophers, including especially Harry Frankfurt and John Fischer, to actual-sequence accounts

of moral responsibility (and, to some extent, free will), according to which only features of the actual history of a choice or action are relevant to the agent's responsibility for them. Against alternative-possibilities accounts, it does not matter, for the agent's freedom and responsibility for her choice or action, whether she was or was not able to choose or act otherwise. In her recent book *Causation and Free Will*, Carolina Sartorio develops a distinctive version of an actual-sequence account of free will, according to which, when agents choose and act freely, their freedom is exclusively grounded in, and supervenes on, the actual *causal* history of such choices or actions. She labels her account ACS (for "actual causal sequence"). On this basis, Sartorio develops a positive account of free will. Like Fischer's, but unlike Frankfurt's, hers is a reasons-responsiveness ("reasons-sensitivity" in her terms), not a hierarchy or harmony, account. Moreover, unlike Fischer's and Frankfurt's, hers is a purely causal account: the only freedom-relevant features of the actual sequence are causal facts. Sartorio's view implies the thesis that causation is the exclusive metaphysical grounding of free will. For a libertarian incompatibilist like me, who holds that (deterministic) causation cannot coexist with free will, this thesis sounds fairly extreme, for it implies, not merely that causation and free will are compatible, a view that may be called "standard compatibilism", but also that causation, given that it is the only ground of free will, is *required* for the latter. This contention may be called "strong compatibilism"[1] and is more abruptly at odds with an incompatibilist approach to free will than standard compatibilism.

I have argued elsewhere against Sartorio's ACS and for an alternative-possibilities account of free will.[2] In the present paper, I focus on Sartorio's positive account of free will in terms of sensitivity to reasons. In the first section I try to give a sense of Sartorio's reasons-sensitivity account of freedom and to determine what distinguishes it from other actual-sequence accounts. The idea that absences can be causes is crucially important in this respect. In the second section I bring to light some problems of Sartorio's proposal. I point, first, to problems related to the view that absences can be causes; second, to problems with her substitution of actual causes for counterfactuals as explanatorily fundamental; and third, to problems with her view that freedom and reasons-sensitivity are exclusively grounded in actual causal facts. These problems are reinforced in the third section, where I hold that Sartorio's arguments for the view that moral responsibility is not exclusively grounded in actual causes apply to free will as well. All these critical considerations, if cor-

rect, throw serious doubts about the truth of her reasons-sensitivity account of free will.

I. SARTORIO'S 'REASONS-SENSITIVITY' APPROACH TO FREE WILL

As I have anticipated, current actual-sequence approaches to moral responsibility and freedom come in two main forms. They have in common the rejection of an alternative-possibilities condition for moral responsibility.

There are, on the one hand, hierarchy or harmony approaches,[3] defended by such philosophers as Harry Frankfurt (1971, 1975), Gary Watson (1982) and Susan Wolf (1990). According to these proposals, whether an action is free, and the agent is responsible for it, depends on whether it is in harmony with certain elements of the agent's psychological structure. For Frankfurt, e.g., these elements include her desires and her desires about these desires (second-order desires). So, Frankfurt writes: "Suppose that a person has done what he wanted to do, that he did it because he wanted to do it, and that the will by which he was moved when he did it was his will because it was the will he wanted. Then he did it freely and of his own free will" [Frankfurt (1971), p. 24]. For Watson, the crucial elements that have to be in harmony are desires and values or, more generally, the agent's motivational and axiological systems. Wolf adds to the latter elements an objective, normative factor: the agent should be able to form her values in accordance to such criteria as truth and goodness.

There are, on the other hand, reasons-responsiveness approaches, represented by philosophers like John Fischer and Mark Ravizza (1998), Ishtiyaque Haji (1998) and R. Jay Wallace (1994). According to Fischer and Ravizza (1998), pp. 41-44, an agent acts freely, and is morally responsible for her action, only if it results from a deliberative 'mechanism' that is responsive to reasons.[4] Roughly, an agent's deliberative mechanism is reasons-responsive provided that, at least in some possible scenarios, or possible worlds, in which this mechanism is in operation, if there are sufficient reasons to do otherwise, she will recognize these reasons and, as a result of this recognition, will choose and act otherwise. An example of Fischer himself can help us see the rationale of this approach. Suppose that Peggy steals a book from the University library for reasons of self-interest, but that she would persist in stealing the book even if she knew that doing so would cause the ruin of herself and her

family. It seems that we are not facing an agent with a sound ability to deliberate and decide rationally, which compromises her freedom and moral responsibility for her action. If so, then the ability to respond to reasons in the indicated sense, to accommodate our choices and actions to our reasons, is a requirement of freedom and moral responsibility.[5]

Sartorio's actual-sequence approach to free will belongs to this second group. However, she departs from Fischer's account in some important respects. According to Sartorio, Fischer's view of reasons-responsiveness is not a purely actual-sequence proposal, for it involves essentially modal notions and counterfactuals about how the agent would act in certain possible situations. Sartorio's account of freedom resorts just to the actual causal history of the action. It does not include modal notions such as possible scenarios or possible worlds. Her proposal is formulated exclusively in terms of actual causes. According to her account, "being sensitive to reasons is not a matter of doing otherwise in the relevant counterfactual scenarios, as traditional accounts of reasons-sensitivity would say; rather, it's a matter of acting on the basis of the right kinds of causes–*actual* causes" [Sartorio (2016), pp. 132-133].

But how can we account for an agent's sensitivity to reasons, which is an ability or capacity, exclusively in terms of the actual causes of her action? It does not seem, for example, that Peggy's lack of reasons-sensitivity has only to do with the actual causes of her stealing, namely desires related to self-interest. The fact that Peggy's stealing the book was caused by such self-interested desires seems compatible with both her possession and her lack of reasons-sensitivity. So, it seems that we cannot dispense with reference to possible scenarios and to counterfactuals about the way Peggy would behave in them as an essential criterion of her sensitivity to reasons or lack thereof.

Sartorio is not unaware of these worries. As she writes: "The shift from a counterfactual approach to an approach in terms of actual causes might seem surprising, at first, as an account of reasons-*sensitivity*. Isn't sensitivity to reasons, after all, mainly a dispositional concept and, as such, shouldn't it be cashed out counterfactually?" [Sartorio (2016), p. 133]. Sartorio does not forbid the use of counterfactuals in judgments about an agent's sensitivity to reasons, but she does not take these counterfactuals to be explanatorily fundamental. According to her, what *is* explanatorily fundamental are actual causes. But how can she meet the objection we have raised, namely that, in many cases, the actual causes of a choice or action are compatible with both possession and lack of reasons-sensitivity?

Sartorio's crucial move in this context is to hold that the actual causes of an event include not only the presence of certain factors but also *the absence* of others. The view of causation that Sartorio elaborates in the first three chapters of her book, which provide the metaphysical foundation for her reasons-sensitivity account of free will in the fourth chapter, includes the thesis that absences can be causes. For example,[6] a fire in the forest can be caused, not only by a lightning, which is a positive factor, but also by lack of sufficient humidity, which is a negative factor, the absence of something. In the practical field, on this perspective, our actions are caused, not just by our positive reasons to perform them,[7] but also by the absence of reasons to *refrain* from performing them. As she writes,

> Typically, the causal histories of our acts involve a few positive reasons as well as the absence of a large number of negative reasons. For example, if I go to the park to get some fresh air, my desire to get some fresh air and the relevant belief are my *actual* positive reasons, but there is also a long list of *counterfactual* negative reasons whose absence is causally explanatory: no one offered me a thousand dollars to stay home, I didn't receive an important phone call, no one needed my immediate help, etc. [Sartorio (2016), pp. 143-4].

Remember Peggy's example. Suppose, however, that she *is* sensitive to reasons, so that she would not steal the book from the library if she had important reasons not to steal it (e.g. if she believed that the ruin for her and her family would result from her stealing). This is a counterfactual statement. For Fischer, Peggy's practical reasoning mechanism is reasons-sensitive mainly because this counterfactual is true of her. In Fischer's conception, the counterfactual is true because, with the actual mechanism in operation, in some possible worlds in which there are important reasons not to steal the book, Peggy recognizes these reasons and does not steal the book. According to Sartorio, however, this counterfactual, even if true, is not explanatorily fundamental, but is itself explained by more fundamental causal facts. The counterfactual is true, according to her, because Peggy's stealing was *actually* caused both by the presence of certain reasons, e.g. the desire to get the book for free, and also (crucially) by *the absence* of other reasons (e.g. the belief that stealing the book would result in the ruin of hers and her family).[8] In deciding to steal the book and doing so, Peggy is actually responding to the absence of this and other reasons to refrain from stealing. She is acting because of this ab-

sence. And it is this actual causal relation between her act and the absence of these reasons that ultimately grounds and explains her sensitivity to reasons, as well as the truth of the relevant counterfactuals.

Here is Sartorio's causal account of reasons-sensitivity, which she calls CRS (Causal Reasons-Sensitivity):

> *CRS (Causal Reasons-Sensitivity)*: An agent is reasons-sensitive in acting in a certain way when the agent acts on the basis of, perhaps in addition to the *presence* of reasons to act in the relevant way, the *absence* of sufficient reasons to refrain from acting in that way, for an appropriately wide range of such reasons [Sartorio (2016), p. 132].

As she clarifies [Ibid., p. 132], "on the basis of" is intended as a causal locution. So, we are reasons-sensitive in acting when our act has the appropriate causes, which include especially absences of reasons to refrain from acting in that way.

Unlike Fischer's, Sartorio's proposal does not mention possible scenarios or other modal notions, and does not essentially contain counterfactuals, either. Only actual causal relations and causal facts are invoked. It is, then, an austere and purely actual-sequence account of free will. Or so it seems. But, its austerity and purity notwithstanding, I think it is not free of problems, as I will try to argue in what follows.

II. Some Problems of Sartorio's Proposal

To begin with, the thesis that absences of certain factors can be causes is far from uncontroversial. It is true that we *explain* certain phenomena by resorting to absences, or negative features. But this does not imply that these negative features are causes; they may often be background conditions, which are required for the efficacy of causal factors, but need not be causal factors themselves. That a certain absence is part of the *explanation* of a phenomenon does not imply that it is part of the *causal history* of that phenomenon. The lightning caused the fire in the forest, on the background of a lack of rain and humidity. Intuitively, what caused the fire was a positive event, the lightning, though the absence of water and humidity was part of the conditions that explained the causal efficacy of that event, then and there, in giving rise to the fire.

Moreover, some apparent absences, or negative features, are in fact present positive features. Lack of humidity, for example, may be just an-

other way of referring to dryness, which is a positive feature of the forest when the lightning hit it. In Peggy's example, is it also the case that the absence of the belief that stealing the book will ruin her and her family may be another way of referring to the presence of a positive belief, the belief that this will not be the case? Not necessarily. That someone does not believe that *p* does not imply that she believes that not-*p*. It may be, for instance, that she has no opinion about whether *p*, or that she does not even understand, or care about, the question whether *p*. Nonetheless, this does not seem to be what happens with Peggy. Assuming that she is a cognitively normal agent, it is intuitively plausible to assume that she does *not* believe that her stealing the book will ruin her and her family. And, if so, it is also plausible to assume that she believes that her stealing the book will *not* ruin her and her family, so that these two beliefs are equivalent in Peggy's cognitive and motivational landscape. In Peggy's case, the absence of the belief that *p* amounts to the presence of the belief that not-*p*.

Applied to Peggy's case, Sartorio's contention would be that Peggy is reasons-sensitive in stealing the book if her act is caused by the absence of several reasons, prominent among which is the belief that stealing the book will ruin her and her family. We have argued that, in this particular case, the absence of this belief amounts to the presence of the belief that her stealing will not provoke that ruin. Let us then focus on the latter. This belief is reasonably taken to be non-occurrent, for we may plausibly suppose that, unlike her desire to get the book for free and the relevant belief, the belief that the stealing will not ruin her and her family is not present to Peggy's consciousness. The belief is purely dispositional; it does not play any active role in Peggy's actual reasoning and mental processes.[9] But we may safely ascribe her this belief in that, e.g., after short reflection, she would assent if asked whether she believed this. But are purely dispositional beliefs causes? The question is akin to asking whether fragility caused the shattering of a glass when it hit the floor. We can say this, but the explanation is different from saying that the glass shattered because of its hitting the floor. Appealing to the fragility of the glass may be part of an explanation of its shattering, but not necessarily a causal explanation. It is a dispositional explanation. Fragility, as a dispositional property of the glass, may be a background condition, which allows for the impact to cause the break. Fragility is there, but not as a cause. Similarly, dryness can be a background condition, which allows the lightning to cause the fire. But if absences are background conditions, or sometimes dispositions, they are not proper caus-

es. Of course, one may hold they are causes by stretching the meaning of "cause" to cover dispositions and background conditions, but this would be a merely nominal, not a substantial, move. It would not show that absences are causes. Using "cause" as an umbrella-term to cover dispositions, background conditions and, to use a traditional term, efficient causes blurs a difference between explanatory tools that is intuitively there. Our conclusion so far is that an account of reasons-sensitivity in terms of absences of reasons is not a purely causal account, against Sartorio's contention. We will strengthen this conclusion with other considerations.

Another problem has to do with Sartorio's thesis that counterfactuals about what a certain agent would do (or would have done) if she had (had) some reasons that she does not have are not explanatorily fundamental for what concerns her reasons-sensitivity and freedom. According to her, the truth of these counterfactuals rests on actual causes, both present and absent. Absent causes are especially relevant in this respect. As she writes,

> Once we recognize the relevance of the absence of reasons to refrain, and how those absences can figure in the causal history of the actual behavior, it is natural to see the counterfactual facts as not at all explanatorily fundamental. That is to say, the relevant counterfactual facts can still obtain, but, when they do, it's by virtue of what the actual sequence is, or how it is constituted (in particular, in virtue of the fact that the actual sequence contains certain absences of reasons), or by virtue of the grounds of those actual-sequence facts themselves [Sartorio (2016), p. 133].

Applied to Peggys' example, her view seems to be that the counterfactual statement that Peggy would not have stolen the book if she had believed that doing so would ruin her and her family is true because his stealing the book is (partly) caused by the absence of that belief. Actual causal facts, and not counterfactuals, are explanatorily basic for an agent's freedom and reasons-sensitivity. Using the example of someone who takes a drug but is not an addict, so that she is sensitive to reasons not to take the drug, Sartorio writes:

> [I]t's because the non-addict is constituted in such a way that he appropriately responds to reasons in the *actual* scenario that we judge that, at least in normal circumstances, he *wouldn't* have taken the drug if some relevant reason to refrain had been present. Although this counterfactual is true, it is not what makes the non-addict free when he takes the drug in the actual

> scenario. What makes him free is the fact that, in taking the drug, he is *actually* responding to the absence of those reasons [Sartorio (2016), p. 133].

As a preliminary critical remark, it seems to me that the content of the statement that, in taking the drug, the non-addict was responding to the absence of important reasons to refrain is not very different from the content of the counterfactual statement according to which she would not have taken the drug if she had had some important reason to refrain. And the same applies to Peggy's example. The content of the statement that, in stealing the book, Peggy was acting on the basis of the absence of a reason to refrain from stealing it is not very different from the content of the counterfactual statement according to which she would not have stolen the book if she had had that reason to refrain. The formulation in terms of absences as causes and in terms of counterfactuals seem to be notational variations, alternative ways of expressing the same thought. But it strikes me that the counterfactual formulation is more perspicuous and natural than the formulation in terms of absences as causes.

Let us tackle the question of explanatory priority of actual causes over counterfactuals. I can agree with Sartorio that reasons-sensitivity has to do partly with features of the actual scenario in which an agent chooses and acts, and that counterfactuals are not explanatorily fundamental concerning an agent's freedom and reasons-sensitivity. But, even if we accept this, the fact that an agent actually responds to the absence of certain reasons does not seem to be explanatorily fundamental, either. For what concerns explanatory fundamentality, actual causal facts seem to be on a par with counterfactuals. Are we prepared to say that it is just an explanatorily fundamental fact that the agent responds to (the absence of) certain reasons? I, for one, am not. The natural question to raise is: why is it that she responds to (the absence of) such reasons? And the right answer would seem to be: because she has sound skills, abilities or capacities for practical reasoning, for assessment of considerations, formation of intentions, etc. It is by virtue of these capacities, which she actually possesses, that the counterfactuals are true; their truth derives from the possession of these abilities. But these abilities and skills are not causes, or causal facts. Now, *the same considerations apply to actual causal facts*, such as that, in choosing and acting, the agent is responding to the absence of certain reasons. Why do these facts obtain? The answer points also to sound abilities, skills and capacities for practical deliberation and choice. The features of the actual scenario that ground an agent's rea-

sons-sensitivity are neither counterfactuals nor actual causal facts, but a cluster of fairly good abilities for practical thinking and decision-making.

We might even hold that these abilities and skills are not explanatorily fundamental, either, if we accept that abilities and dispositions are grounded in categorical bases (like, e.g., solubility is grounded in a certain molecular structure). In the case of the ability to deliberate and decide, it can be taken to rest on certain highly complex psychological and psychophysical structures.[10] However, these structures are not and cannot be reduced to causal facts and relations, either.

So, I do not find Sartorio's view that freedom and reasons-sensitivity are grounded only in actual causal facts convincing. They seem to rest partly on non-causal properties and structures.

III. Moral Responsibility and Free Will

According to Sartorio's ACS approach, then, free will is exclusively grounded in actual causes or causal facts. The qualification "exclusively" is crucially important in order to distinguish her view from other actual-sequence approaches, which may include, among the grounds of freedom, features of the actual sequence that are not causal. As I have just argued, I think this is precisely the case. But the qualification is also crucial for distinguishing Sartorio's approach from some alternative-possibilities approaches, since an alternative-possibilities theorist can accept that freedom is partly grounded in features of the actual sequence, and that some of them may be causal. What this theorist adds to this contention is that freedom is *also* grounded in the availability of alternative possibilities. So, the distinctive thesis of Sartorio's ACS with respect to both other actual-sequence proposals and some alternative-possibilities views is the claim that freedom with respect to a choice or action is not grounded in anything other than the actual causal history that issues in that choice or action. As she proposes to understand actual sequences, "the actual sequence issuing in an act is just its causal history" [Sartorio (2016), p. 21].

However, Sartorio does not think that this thesis about free will applies also to (moral) responsibility. According to her, responsibility involves a cognitive or epistemic component that is not properly causal. She writes:

> Recall that responsibility is supposed to involve, in addition to the freedom or control component, a purely *epistemic* component: one that tracks, roughly, the agents' awareness of their acts and the moral significance of their acts. In light of this, it is far from clear why anyone would think that responsibility should also be exclusively grounded in actual [causal] sequences [Sartorio (2016), p. 35].

In order to argue that responsibility is not *exclusively* grounded in actual [causal] sequences, Sartorio designs the following example:

> **Squeaky Button**: I love squeaky sounds. I know that pushing a certain button would result in a squeaky sound, so I push the button to hear the sound [Sartorio (2016), p. 36].

The example has two variants, Aware and Unaware. In the Aware variant, I know that pushing the button will result in the destruction of a remote village. I do not want those people to die, but I do really like squeaky sounds, I know of no other way to hear one and press the button to hear it. In the Unaware variant, instead, I am not aware of the terrible consequences of my pressing the button, and no cognitively normal human being could foresee that consequence.

According to Sartorio, I am responsible for the village's destruction in the Aware variant, but not in the Unaware variant. A difficulty I have in admitting that I am responsible in the Aware variant has to do with the extreme character of this variant. Someone who presses the button just for the pleasure of hearing the loved sound while knowing about the horrendous consequence thereof looks clearly insane and then he is plausibly not a responsible agent.[11] This difficulty, however, could easily be circumvented by changing and softening conveniently the details of the example; if so, then it does not affect the essential point, namely that I am responsible in Aware but not in Unaware. In both cases, Sartorio writes, "what motivates me to push the button is … the desire to hear the squeaky sound" [Sartorio (2016), p. 36]. Sartorio assumes that, from a causal point of view, both variants are on a par, but, since there is a difference in responsibility, this difference is not due to causal elements. It is due, presumably, to an epistemic component of responsibility (the awareness or unawareness of the connection between pressing the button to hear the sound and the wiping out of the village) beyond freedom or control conditions: "[T]he consequences of my behavior for which I can be held responsible are only those that I could reasonably anticipate.

In other words, the epistemic conditions for responsibility are met in one scenario and not in the other, and, intuitively, this is what accounts for the difference in responsibility" [Sartorio (2016), p. 36].

My reaction to this is that the same considerations can be applied to the freedom with which I caused the destruction of the village through my pressing the button. It seems to me that there is a difference, not only in responsibility, but also in freedom, between the Aware and the Unaware variant of Squeaky Button. I think it is correct to say that I freely destroyed the village (or I freely allowed it to be destroyed) in the Aware variant, but not in the Unaware variant, assuming that, in the latter variant, I could not reasonably foresee that pressing the button would result in that massacre. It seems right to say that I do not freely do what I am (non-culpably) unaware of being doing or causing with my action, provided that I cannot reasonably know or anticipate it. Therefore, a cognitive component is also present in freedom, and not only in responsibility. If this is on the right track, then cognitive, non-causal conditions underlie, not only responsibility, but freedom as well. So, though I agree with Sartorio that responsibility is not exclusively grounded in actual causal sequences, in that it has a purely epistemic component, I hold that the same is true of freedom. Freedom has also a non-causal, epistemic component and, if this is so, then ACS fails, since it contends that freedom is exclusively grounded in actual causal facts and connections.

IV. Conclusion

With Sartorio, I also think that sensitivity or responsiveness to reasons is necessary for free will and moral responsibility. However, I disagree with her for what respects her analysis of reasons-sensitivity. I have tried to argue that Sartorio's exclusively causal account of reasons-sensitivity fails. First, the notion of absences as causes is deeply problematic. Absences can be just background conditions or dispositions, or both, and not properly causes. Sometimes they can also amount to the presence of positive causes. Moreover, I have argued that, if counterfactuals are not explanatorily fundamental, as Sartorio holds, neither actual causes are. Freedom and reasons-sensitivity seem to rest ultimately on non-causal properties and structures, which include abilities and skills for practical deliberation and decision-making. Moreover, I have held that Sartorio's view that moral responsibility is not exclusively grounded in actual causes, but has also a cognitive component, should also be ex-

tended to free will. But this cognitive component is not properly causal. My general conclusion, then, is that free will is not exclusively grounded in actual causes and that ACS ultimately fails.

I have an even deeper disagreement with Sartorio, though I cannot justify it here: as a libertarian, I think that alternative possibilities at the reach of the agent are also necessary for free will and moral responsibility.[12] In order for an agent to decide and act freely, and to be morally responsible for such a decision and action, she should be able to decide and act otherwise, even with the constellation of reasons that she actually had, then and there, when she decided and acted as she actually did.[13]

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NOTES

[1] Hobart (1934) is an early example of a strong compatibilist account.

[2] See Moya (forthcoming).

[3] Sometimes they are also called "mesh-theories".

[4] They include, additionally, the requirement that the 'mechanism' in question should be the agent's own. For simplicity of exposition, we will let aside this additional requirement.

[5] In Fischer and Ravizza's approach, the scenarios in which an agent would do otherwise are conceived as purely counterfactual. There is no suggestion that she should have real access to those scenarios. So, the proposal remains compatibilist in spirit: even if determinism is true, and there are no alternative possibilities of choice and action, this does not exclude free action and moral responsibility. The proposal is also compatibilist in that there is no suggestion that the agent should be able to change her choice without a change in her reasons.

[6] The example is mine, not Sartorio's.

[7] An important assumption in Sartorio's view is a causal conception of reasons, according to which reasons are (a species of) causes. Though widely shared after Davidson's path-breaking article "Actions, reasons, and causes", it is not universally accepted. Philosophers like Carl Ginet (2002), (2008), Hugh McCann (1998) and Stewart Goetz (2009) reject it. I tend to agree with the latter, but I am not going to discuss this question here.

[8] In addition to her agreement with a causal conception of reasons, Sartorio accepts, with many other authors, that reasons to act are psychological states, such as beliefs and desires. I am taking for granted this view just for the sake of argument, without committing myself to it. A significant minority of philosophers, such as Jonathan Dancy (2000) and Maria Alvarez (2010), do not accept that view.

[9] I write "purely dispositional" in that, in some sense, all beliefs include dispositions to infer, reason, and even to act.

[10] These structures would be sufficient, but not necessary, for the abilities, owing to the widely acknowledged possibility of multiple physical/neurophysiological realization of dispositions and functional properties in general.

[11] For a defense of sanity as a condition of responsibility, see Wolf (1987).

[12] As I said, I have argued for this alternative-possibilities approach to freedom and moral responsibility, against Sartorio's ACS account, in my (forthcoming). See also, for a defense of alternative possibilities as a requirement of freedom and moral responsibility, my (2007), (2011) and (2014), among other writings.

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