

# What Should a Powers-Based Theory of Free Will be About?

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Kant argued that we are free agents not in virtue of being the cause of our actions, but (instead) insofar as we are capable of willing in accordance with the requirements of pure practical reason. Ever since (and perhaps even before), event-causal compatibilists and event-causal libertarians alike have been defining free will in ways that bypass the idea of agents being initiators of causal determination. To be free is to escape the hold of causation altogether, even if only for a fleeting, probabilistic moment. To be free is to be able to do what we are deterministically caused to want to do. To be free is to have been able to do otherwise, had we been deterministically caused to prefer to do otherwise. To be free is to act in ways that are in keeping with our second-order desires, or our best selves. Etc. Side-stepping the issue of causal determination is an understandable strategy for those who hold to any broadly Humean account of causation as regularity (be the order contingent or transcendently necessary, actual or counterfactual), since those who do so have already answered in the negative the question of whether or not agents are initiators of causal processes. But it is a feat that anti-passivist powers theorists would do well to reject. Against this backdrop I try to clarify just what a powers-based theory of free will should, and should not, be about.