

Freedom, agency and power

We naturally understand ourselves to have control over our actions so that we can determine for ourselves what we do. This power of self-determination is freedom, and seems to involve a power to determine alternative outcomes. What kind of power is this? The paper argues that our conception of freedom radically distinguishes it from ordinary causation, and that the longstanding co-existence of conflicting compatibilist and incompatibilist intuitions about freedom reflects this fact. The paper discusses Thomas Hobbes's scepticism about the very possibility of self-determination in any form, a scepticism that was not based on Hobbes's determinism, but on his claims that the only possible form of power in nature is ordinary causation, and that self-determination cannot occur as ordinary causation