

Do powers need powers to make them powerful? From Pandispositionalism to Aristotle

Abstract

Do powers have powers? More urgently, do powers need further powers to do what powers do? Stathis Psillos says they do. He finds this a fatal flaw in the nature of pure powers: pure powers have a regressive nature. Their nature is incoherent to us, and they should not be admitted into the ontology. I argue that pure powers do not *need further* powers; rather, they do what they do because they *are* powers. I show that at the heart of Psillos' regress is a metaphysical division he assumes between a pure power to ϕ and its directedness towards the manifestation of ϕ -ing, i.e. between a pure power and its essence. But such an ontological division between an entity and its essence has already been shown by Aristotle to be detrimental, condemning the entity to a regressive nature.

I show that Psillos' regress is but an instance of Aristotle's regress argument on the relation between an entity and its essence. I compare Aristotle's, Bradley's, and Psillos' regresses, showing that Bradley's and Psillos' (different) conclusions from the regress arguments lead to impasses. I then build on Aristotle's directive against regressive natures, arguing with him that an entity is not other than its nature (being divided from its nature by a relation between them). Rather, an entity *is* an instantiated nature itself. The Aristotelian position I put forward explains how the *oneness* of the entity is achieved by its being an instance of a type. Thus, the regress is blocked, and the nature of pure powers is shown to pose no threats of an ontological or epistemological kind, if physics gave us reasons to posit pure powers.

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