

Causal Power of the Substance of the Human Person vis-à-vis the Physicalists' Causality

Aloysius Nnaemeka Ezeoba

Abstract: One major problem which the substance of the human person has encountered in the course of the history of philosophy is that of explaining the sense in which it has causal power. Aristotle taught that substance has genuine causal power which made him describe substance as a unified entity and not as a bundle of properties or bundle of particles as atomists, such as Democritus, held. The naturalists, especially the physicalists, argue that causal power belongs only to the physical states and not to substance as a unifying entity. This paper uses the argument from imputability to sustain that, against physicalism, the substance of the human person has causal power because it is a unified entity possessing consciousness and free will. Thus, one's action is imputable to one's substance as a unified free conscious agent.

Keywords: substance, causal power, human person, imputability

Causal Power of the Substance of the Human Person

What can we refer to as the substance of the human person in its definitive sense? How can one definitively pinpoint this substance in the human person? What are the defining factors of the substance of the human person as such? The more common and simpler understanding of it is the conception of the individual being as substance. Thus, when I say that Socrates is a substance it is understood easily because Socrates is a distinct individual. Aristotle has argued that substance is

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primary in every way; in definition, knowledge, and time.¹ For him, *separability* and *thingness* are characteristics of substance.² Further, this individual is a unified entity capable of bringing something into being.³

Aristotle himself argued that apart from substance being primary and basic, it could be spoken of in *four* ways: 1) the substance of a thing is what being is for that thing, 2) the universal of that thing, 3) the genus of a thing, and 4) what underlies a thing.⁴ For him, what is fundamental in substance is that it is that which underlies an entity after all changes.⁵ In this sense, what is fundamental in the substance of Socrates is that which underlies Socrates. This is the core meaning of substance, that is, the underlying thing, which is the *sub stare* (meaning, that which stands under an existing being). Therefore, the real meaning of substance in Aristotle is the underlying thing in an individual being. The substance of Socrates refers then strictly to that which underlies Socrates in spite of all changes he undergoes in life.

Trouble starts when we want to determine actually the ground of this causal power of Socrates. The question is whether this underlying thing, substance, can cause something to be, or if it is only the physical things that can do such. When, for instance, Socrates slaps Plato, we can comfortably say that it is this individual Socrates that should be held responsible for slapping Plato. In this sense, the physical individual Socrates has the causal power to bring an effect into being. He could be held responsible because not only does he have causal power, but also because he is a conscious agent with free will. The question is: Is it this physical Socrates who slapped Plato or is it something that constitutes Socrates as an individual unity which is, however, not distinct from Socrates that did it? Is there something underlying beyond the physical which one could call Socrates or is Socrates just the physical individual we see? For instance, Socrates could have slapped Plato when he was 12 years old, and when he reaches 20 years old the offense of slapping Plato is still imputable to him despite all the changes he has undergone over the past eight years. Within these eight years, he could have grown taller, developed a beard, have a deeper voice, became muscular, and so on. Can we still comfortably say that it is the same Socrates eight years ago who slapped

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. by J. L. Ackrill and Lindsay Judson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), VII, 2, 1028,8b.

² *Ibid.*, VII, 3, 1029, 30a. Separability refers to the fact that an individual is distinct from others. Thingness means that the individual is a thing or an individual being.

³ Aristotle, *Categories*, in *Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. by J. Ackrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), V, 4a21-4b19.

⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 3, 1028, 33b.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VII, 1, 1028, 24a.

Plato and no longer the present Socrates who has undergone some changes? Is the substance of this physical Socrates whom we are looking at or is there something beyond what we see which is called Socrates? Is the cause of the slap something that endures over a period of time and which organizes an individual into a unified entity or is it just the physical thing we see? It is then that one begins to look beyond the physical, though not totally independent of the physical.

Aristotle argued that without the primary substance (that is, the individual being like Socrates), nothing would exist, and for substance to come into being there must be another substance already existing that generates it.⁶ Thus, substance can only come into being through another substance. In this sense, non-substances cannot possess causal power of this sort. This was part of the reason that made Aristotle argue that substance is a unified entity and that substance is not composed of its parts.⁷ The parts, according to him, are not substances in themselves; rather, they inhere in individual substances. He taught that substance is a unified entity, and not as a bundle of properties or bundle of particles as atomists, such as Democritus, held. According to Aristotle, it is impossible for a substance to possess substances that are present in it in actuality. So, if a substance is one thing, it cannot be composed of substances present in it. This blocks the possibility of referring to any part of the human person or the brain state as a substance. For this reason, he rejected Democritus's theory of atomism that atoms are substances.⁸ Aristotle's position emphasizes the fact that substance is a unified entity that can bring other things into being.

Jonathan Lowe has emphasized the same point that substance is a unified entity and more importantly that only substance has genuine causal power and liability. Non-substances have no causal power to bring things into existence.⁹ For Lowe, non-substances do not have sufficient causal power and, hence, cannot sufficiently be the cause of anything. This causal power is accompanied by liabilities to act upon something and to be acted upon. Lowe is not arguing that events, rather than substance, cannot cause anything, but that such event causation is never ontologically fundamental. For instance, when we say that a car collision caused person A to die, it is not the collision itself that caused A to die. Rather, it is the car which collided forcefully that

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 10, 1035,14b.

⁷ *Ibid.*, VII, 10, 1035,18b.

⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, 13, 1039,13a.

⁹ E. J. Lowe, *Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.

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caused A's death. Hence, events cannot ontologically be the cause of anything. Lowe understands substance in its fundamental meaning to be something more than physical. The human person, according to Lowe, is a psychological substance possessing causal powers as a free rational agent.¹⁰ He is of the opinion that the causal power of the human person is different from that of other substances because the human person possesses rationality and free will with which to act or cause a thing to be and be able to accept responsibility for one's action.¹¹ However, some naturalist philosophers, like the physicalists, try to attribute the causal power to non-substances.

Physicalists' Notion of Causality

The naturalists, especially the bundle theorists, tend to argue that substance is nothing other than the collection of properties. The implications of this line of thought are: 1) that properties are substances; 2) that outside the properties, substance does not exist; and 3) that activities of substance are nothing other than the activities of the properties of an individual. The crudest of this argument is the one held by the physicalists. For them, every physical event has a physical cause, or everything supervenes on the physical. This is to say that, for the physicalists, Aristotle's and Lowe's argument that nothing comes into existence outside the causal power of substance is invalid especially if substance is to be understood as something that stands under. Hence, physicalists reject such attribution of causal power to substance. Their argument is commonly viewed from two perspectives, namely, 1) every event has a cause and the cause itself is a physical event, and 2) mental events are caused by physical events.¹²

One of the contemporary proponents of physicalism, David Papineau, argues that every physical event has purely physical causes. For Papineau, mental events are not only determined by physical events, but they are also in some sense the same substance as the physical. He rejects any view

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹¹ Henrik Lagerlund has argued that it is only the human being that is partially the same over a long period of time because we have the intellectual soul which remains totally the same. Every other substance, according to Lagerlund, has a weaker form of identity or sameness. Cf. Henrik Lagerlund, "Aristotelian Powers, Mechanism, and Final Causes in the Late Middle Ages," in *Reconsidering Causal Power: Historical and Conceptual Perspectives*, ed. by Benjamin Hill, Henrik Lagerlund, and Stathis Psillos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 87.

¹² David Spurrett and David Papineau, "A Note on the Completeness of 'Physics'," in *Analysis*, 59:1 (1999), 25–29. Such a notion of causal power is endorsed by the physicalist view that physics is complete and can account fully for the entire physical action and effect.

of mental events being different from the physical, as propagated by epiphenomenalism.¹³ Causal power, for Papineau, belongs to physical events, not to substance, especially if substance is to be identified with something more than the physical entity.¹⁴ He argues further that modern dualism is a dualism of properties, not that of substance as seen in the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. The cause of physical effect, according to him, is only other physical causes so that the world is causally complete, giving no room for non-physical causes such as consciousness. For him, human behavior is fully accounted by physical antecedents in such a way that any distinct consciousness is only a causal dangler that has no relevance to the question of causality.¹⁵

John Searle in his work *Minds, Brains and Science*, while presenting what he calls the contemporary version of the mind-body problem, has argued that all mental phenomena, whether consciousness, pains, or thoughts, are caused by processes going on in the brain. For Searle, brains cause minds, minds do not cause brains; mental phenomena are features of the brain.¹⁶ But one peculiar thing about Searle's version of materialism is that it does not as such deny free will or reason or consciousness; only that he regards them as features of the brain implying that they could be explained through the explanation of the brain processes.¹⁷ Erik Sorem has accused Searle of advocating property dualism with his argument that mental states are just features of the brain. Property dualism argues that mental properties

¹³ See David Papineau, *Philosophical Naturalism* (Oxford: Blackwell 1993), 11. Epiphenomenalism states that the physical brain can cause mental events in the mind, but that the mind cannot interact with the brain at all.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁵ See David Papineau and Howard Selina, *Introducing Consciousness*, ed. by Richard Appignanesi (Cambridge: Icon, 2012), 64–66. See also David Papineau, *Thinking about Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); David Papineau, *The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

¹⁶ See John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984, 2003).

¹⁷ It is good to recall the caveat of Thomas Nagel that physical science cannot help us to fully understand the irreducible subjective center of consciousness which is a conspicuous part of the universe. This aspect of consciousness, for Nagel, has to do with the mental aspect that is evident to the first-person or the inner view of the conscious agent. This argument of Nagel is against the materialists who argue that it is only the physical world that is irreducibly real and that, if the mind really exists, its place must be founded in the physical world. See Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 37–42.

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involving conscious experiences are fundamental properties identified by physics.¹⁸

Ricardo Restrepo has argued that the physicalist argument that physical events supervene the mental states makes all the non-physical metaphysical entities such as God, the soul, mental states, and others more or less false.¹⁹ If every physical event supervenes on the physical, the idea of substance as the underlying thing, *sub stare*, would be superfluous or non-existent, and the whole concept of human *free will* or *freedom of action* derived from consciousness would be more or less an illusion as human action would be determined by only the physical component of the individual and the mental aspect will become impotent, so that the human person as unified entity or substance would be causally non-viable. Although physicalism does not necessarily deny consciousness, except when it conceives the material causation as deterministic and incapable of reason at least as its features, the problem is that the physicalists seem to turn what is normally understood as properties of the classical notion of substance into substances or quasi-substances that possess causal powers.

Substance versus Properties

The physicalist argument that causal power is physical and complete, giving no room for non-physical causation, such as mental causation, raises questions about the nature of non-mental or non-substantial entities. As we previously saw, Aristotle's understanding of an individual entity possessing only one substance but with many predicates implies that brain processes are properties of the human substance.²⁰ This is contrary to many thoughts in the Modern era.

During the Modern period, Robert Boyle favored Democritus' notion of atomism revived by Pierre Gassendi, which Aristotle had rejected, and thought that individual things are bundles or aggregates of atoms.²¹ In this sense, Boyle's notion of causal power could be ascribed to these bundles, not

¹⁸ See Erik Sorem, "Searle, Materialism, and the Mind-Body Problem," in *Perspectives*, 3:1 (2010).

¹⁹ See Ricardo Restrepo, "Two Myths of Psychophysical Reductionism," in *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 2:2 (2012).

²⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 13, 1039,13a.

²¹ He argued that what our senses perceive in bodies are great multitudes of corpuscles or cluster of corpuscles and these are principles of many sorts of natural bodies such as earth, water, salt, etc., whose particles adhere so closely to each other. See Robert Boyle, *Selected Philosophical Papers*, ed. by M. A. Stewart (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 42.

the underlying unity which Aristotle called substance. Locke and Isaac Newton more or less accepted Boyle's theory of substance as a bundle of particles. Locke made a distinction between particular substance and substance in general. The particular substances, according to him, such as man, horse, gold, and water, are *bundles* or aggregates of simple ideas, while substance in general is the *unknown support* (or substratum) of such qualities that are capable of producing simple ideas in us.²² Locke ascribed this capability or power to the substance; he believes that substance, even the one he calls spiritual substance, has causal power.²³ Exponents of the *bundle theory*, such as David Hume, rejected the doctrine of unknown support and also denied the idea of a necessary connection between cause and effect, and described it as a mere conventional way of associating things.²⁴ Hence, he denied the notion of necessitating causal power to substance.

In contrast, the exponents of the theory of substance argue that if all the qualities of a substance are removed, there is something that remains.²⁵

²² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II, xxiii, 2, 20. This idea of substance as a *bundle of ideas* and as an *unknown support* later became problematic due to its semblance with the idea of bare particular. Locke's unknown support comes closer to Aristotle's notion of substance as the *underlying stuff*, although it has its own problems.

²³ *Ibid.*, II, xxiii, 10, 5 & 18, 25 & 37, 10-15.

²⁴ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature (1739-40)*, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 233. Nicholas Malebranche, a disciple of Rene Descartes and a defender of Cartesian dualism, raised the notion of occasionalism as a response to the problem of interaction of the dual substances in Descartes. Writing on this problem as it exists today, Benjamin Hill contends that Malebranche could have reasoned that the best way to resolve that problem was to posit that only a necessary being, God, could have such a necessitating causal power, not any contingent being. (See Benjamin Hill, "The Ontological Status of Causal Powers: Substances, Modes, and Humeanism," in *Reconsidering Causal Power: Historical and Conceptual Perspectives*, ed. by Benjamin Hill, Henrik Lagerlund, and Stathis Psillos [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021], 145.) For him, the 17th century occasionalist criticism shows that we cannot just postulate causal power as explanatory device and expect that we will easily deal the attendant metaphysical issues arising therein. The core problem is not to argue whether or not causal power exists but rather to explain how it could exist. (See *Ibid.*, 146.) Hill challenged the metaphysicians to discover a naturalistic way of finding a balance, within our logical possible world, between contingency and necessary.

²⁵ The substance theorists would ask, for instance: What is an orange like outside the sum of its qualities? Or what remains when all the qualities of an orange (like color, roundness, the back cover, the liquid inside it, the seeds, and the fiber inside it) are removed? One may be tempted to answer either that "nothing remains" which is a confirmation of bundle theory, or that "something remains" which is substance thereby confirming the theory of substratum. A very recent argument on this debate was presented by Lowe. He argues that such questions about what remains after all the qualities of a substance have been removed is an erroneous question arising from what he calls *category mistake*. For him, it is a category mistake because it assumes that both the substance and its qualities belong to the same category whereas they belong to different categories. According to him, both the question and the answer should not

The problem here is which one has causal power: substance or properties? If there is no substance as the underlying stuff or that which stands under as the bundle theorists have argued, how could a crime that was committed a few years ago be attributed to the same person after some years have passed as we indicated above? This is because the properties mutate, and the clearer way of identifying the same person who committed a crime some years back is to appeal to the issue of identity. This might boil down to the question of whether identity refers to a substance or a bundle of properties. Are human beings the same over a long period of time, based on their properties or based on their substances? Though I am not going into the problem of identity in this essay, the more logical way out of this problem is that the individual will be re-identified as the same thing or person previously known.²⁶ The root of this re-identification can only be found in the substance as *sub stare* or the underlying stuff which remains after all changes, though the naturalists could

have occurred in the first place. (See E. J. Lowe, *The Routledge Guide to Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [New York: Routledge, 2013], 90.) Thus, the problems of bundle theory and that of substratum are, for Lowe, a misunderstanding of the relationship between the substance and its qualities. Lowe's solution was to posit non-Cartesian substance dualism and to regard the human person as a psychological substance (non-Cartesian dualism is the dualism of the human person as a subject of experience and one's organized body). But such a solution raises more questions than it has answered. Could there be properly two substances in an individual entity? Is the substance of the human person rightly limited to just the psychological level? Strawson has proposed a solution in which he rejected Cartesian dualism arguing that the human person has two aspects instead of two substances and that the two aspects of the human person are the body and the mind. (See Peter F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* [London: Routledge, 1996], 111.)

²⁶ David Wiggins, while trying to reconcile Aristotle's primary substance with Kant's idea of substance, argues that the central question is the ability for a thing to be re-identified at different times and under different attributes. In this sense, for Wiggins, identity must always go with attributes. (See David Wiggins, *Identity and Spatio-temporal Continuity* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967], 27.) This identity exists only among sortals or kinds of the same substance. (See David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 9.) He believes that the concept of the body (somatism) is too generic and must be narrowed down to a sortal concept. But Ayers, for instance, disagrees with Wiggins and argued that identity has to do with material body or the same material body, rather than kind of sorts. (See Michael Ayers, "Substance: Prolegomena to a Realist Theory of Identity," in *Journal of Philosophy*, 88:2 [1991], 78.) Furthermore, Lowe tends to differ from Wiggins's argument of sortal or Ayers's material body when he argues that identification or re-identification must take into consideration the sortal term (nominal essence) and the real essence. (See Lowe, *Routledge Guide to Locke's Essay*, 81.) Van Inwagen refers to the psychological-continuity account of personal identity across time. (See P. van Inwagen, *Ontology, Identity, and Modality: Essays in Metaphysics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 149.) For W. Norris Clarke, self-identity does not mean being unchanging; rather, it is the capacity to retain the same substance (underlying stuff) across accidental changes. (See W. Norris Clarke, "To Be Is to Be Substance-in-Relation," in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994], 107.)

argue that without the physical properties, such underlying stuff cannot be known or identified.

Naturalists, especially the physicalists, base their argument on this, thereby ascribing causal power to the properties without which. For naturalists, the said substance as the underlying stuff cannot be known. My argument maintains that properties or non-substances of the human person cannot have causal power because they are dependent on a substance without which they cannot exist. Rather, the causal power of the human person as a free agent belongs to the human substance as an underlying thing, *sub stare*, which remains the same across a period of time and after all changes. This position is what I want to attempt to develop using the argument from imputability.

The Imputability Argument

To attempt a solution to the problem of causal power between substance and its properties, I will use here an argument from imputability. The imputability argument states that the responsibility of an action is assigned or attributed to the agent of that action, or more precisely, to the substance or the human person that caused the action because it has causal power, free will, and consciousness. Actions are imputable to an agent as a unified entity who caused the action in order that the objective of the imputability may be realized. The objective is to punish the offender and deter potential offenders, and these could not be realized if the agent of the action is not understood as a unified entity beyond the mere physical states and mental or psychological spheres of existence. At the background of this imputability is the presupposition that the agent possesses rational free will. In this case, it is not just the physical state as property dualists or physicalists would argue that caused the action but the entire person. For instance, if person A slaps person B, the property dualists may, by implication, argue that either it was the hand or the brain processes that caused the slapping. In this case, the whole individual is more or less not responsible, but only part of the individual. If property dualism is true, the court of justice could condemn certain physical parts of the body, while leaving the whole human person. If the bundle theory of substance is true, then the trial of an individual who committed an offense a few years ago would be to a certain extent not meaningful because the person has undergone some physical changes to the extent that one could comfortably argue that it is no longer the same person committed the offense in the past looking at the physical properties in those

passage of years. But common sense still tells us that the trial of such a person after many years could be just and effective in deterring potential criminals. That is, it is still believed that the person condemned after many years is the same person who committed the crime many years ago, provided it is still within the legal period to try the offender. This is based on the fact that despite all those physical changes, something still remains which underlies (*sub stare*) that individual person and still makes one the same person one was when one committed the offense. People still wish to have a good name even after their death and would do everything possible during their lifetime to prevent having a bad name that might outlive them. This seems to imply that the human substance or the human person is not limited within the spheres of the physical and the psychological but endures beyond such spheres of existence. My point here is that any recognition of the property as substance or acceptance that non-substance of the human person has causal power would make the imputability of action to an individual entity difficult.

As briefly stated above, if person A slaps person B, following the argument of the physicalists, then it was the hand of A that slapped B or that it was the firing of the neurons in A's brain that moved the hand to slap B. In any of these options about A slapping B, the cause of that action of slapping has not really been attributed to A. Instead, the physicalist argument has imputed it to the parts of A. A's hand is not A in the real sense though it is part of A. The firing of the neuron in A's brain is just an activity in A which is not the whole person of A. In fact, the implication of the physicalist position is that A as an individual could be exonerated from the culpability of slapping B since the brain process that caused the slap is only a physical component of A, not A as a unified being. However, in the actual sense when it is said that A as a person slapped B, this cannot be attributed to just the hand of A, or the firing of the neuron in A's brain. While these may be included, they could not be considered as the cause, but only as conditions or dispositions for the cause of the slap where imputability applies to the cause. However, those conditions are necessary, but not sufficient, for the cause, because without the conditions the causal power would be impossible. Lowe, for instance, has argued that the causal power is to be rightly attributed to the *self* A which is a psychological substance. He rejects the physicalist position, arguing that only substance possesses causal power.²⁷ Lowe's notion that causal power belongs to substance alone is plausible, but his limitation of substance to the level of psychology poses a problem to such imputability and to substance

²⁷ Lowe, *Personal Agency*, 19.

itself. It is reasonable to accept that substance possesses conditions or dispositions, but such dispositions are causally impotent and inculpable. These conditions are not only the physical components of substance but also the non-physical components like the desires, beliefs, spirit, and soul which the physicalists tend to describe as mental states. It is only causal power that is culpable, and this belongs not to the parts of an entity but rather to the unity of an individual. The principle of this unity is substance. This unity cannot be identified to any part, physical or non-physical, of the individual. A cause of an action is that which is legitimately culpable for the action. Additionally, Stathis Psillos has argued that power is inherent in substance. Power, for Psillos, are qualities inherent in substances. For Psillos, power qua power according to the Aristotelian-Thomistic account inheres in substance.²⁸ This means that, just like the properties which are inherent in substance, without the substance, such power will not exist. The existence of causal power is dependent on substance.

Furthermore, this substance or the subsisting unity is not to be identified with the theory of substratum.²⁹ It would be erroneous to argue that the cause of A slapping B is outside the physical identity of A as he is known as Mr. A. That is, it is not the physical Mr. A we see that slaps B but rather that it is something outside A which is unknown or unseen that is the cause of the slap. In other words, the causal power of a substance is now being attributed to the “substratum” of A which is outside the physical A we see. The implication of this line of argument is that the causal power belongs more or less to something completely different from the physical individual we see, which is sometimes identified as bare particular. This position is untenable because substance cannot be completely outside the existing individual. Therefore, while on the one hand, the substratum theory of substance is inadequate to explain the causal power of substance, the bundle theory on the other hand is itself incapable of this explanation.

The physicalist argument has not offered a sufficient answer to the problem of the causal power of the human person. If we follow the notion of property dualism, the tendency is to attribute the causal power of an action, say Mr. A slaps Mr. B, to physical properties which supervene on the mental properties, but this is still inadequate to impute the action to Mr. A. Such a position is practically untenable based on our argument from imputability.

²⁸ Stathis Psillos, “The Inherence and Directedness of Powers,” in *Reconsidering Causal Power: Historical and Conceptual Perspectives*, ed. by Benjamin Hill, Henrik Lagerlund, and Stathis Psillos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 64–65.

²⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, xxiii, 2, 20.

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However, one can admit that the substance of the human person is that which underlies the physical person we see, and that this substance is not different from and does not exist independent of the physical thing we see. Thus, it could be admitted that both the physical and the non-physical aspects are necessary for the explanation of the causal power of substance, but each of them existing independent of the other cannot give us a proper explanation of this causal power. While I accept that there are non-physical aspects of substance, such as desires, beliefs, spirit, or soul, I reject the idea of substratum as such as an independent existent entity different from the physical individual.

To determine the causal power of the human person as the substance is to determine the substance itself. It would be better to argue that both the physical individual, for instance, the Socrates we see and his non-physical components are necessary for identifying what the substance of Socrates is which then possesses causal power. Following the notion of primary substance in Aristotle, we can agree with Lowe that causal power belongs to substance,³⁰ and that substance is more than the mere physical individual or just the non-physical components. This means that a substance includes all its properties and dispositions as *subsisting unity* of an individual. For instance, one can detach the hand or leg of Socrates, but he still remains. Socrates could also lose all his beliefs and desire, even his entire mental state, yet still remains. Again, one can “remove” the entire physical parts of Socrates, while Socrates still remains, as in the case of a dead person. Also, one cannot remove completely both the physical qualities and non-physical qualities of Socrates, and Socrates still remains. Hence, substance cannot be identified with just the physical aspects of an individual or with the non-physical aspects of the individual. Substance encapsulates the entire physical and non-physical qualities of an individual of which both the physical and the non-physical qualities are not parts or aspects of the substance, but aspects of the individual. The substance of an individual entity is the *unity* of that individual which persists over time. My argument from imputability states that things/offenses are imputed to the individual human person, like Socrates, as a unity of both the physical and the non-physical components that underlie one so that the entire being of the person becomes the cause of one’s action and takes responsibility of the action caused as a free and reasonable agent of that action.

³⁰ Lowe, *Personal Agency*, 145. See also E. J. Lowe, *Subjects of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 58–60.

Imputability and Free Will

The imputability argument presupposes the freedom of the human person as a conscious agent who is capable of initiating action consciously and freely while taking responsibility for that action. Lowe always speaks of substance possessing causal power and liability, as we saw earlier. Liability here refers to the ability to take responsibility for one's action. It is only a free and conscious agent that is capable of this. It is also to such agent that action could be reasonably imputed. The human person possesses consciousness and free will. For instance, W. Norris Clarke following St. Thomas Aquinas describes the human person as *dominus sui* meaning a consciously responsible master of one's action. He writes: "Thus for St. Thomas [...], a person is a being that is *dominus sui*, that is, master of itself, or *self-possessing* (in the order of knowledge by self-consciousness; in the order of will and action by self-determination or free will)."³¹ Clarke seems to understand consciousness and free will as interwoven which are rooted in the causal power of the human person as substance. He goes further to cite the second description of a person given by Aquinas as an intellectual nature that possesses its own act of existence so that it can be the self-conscious, and a responsible source of its own action.³² Clarke's concerns here are consciousness and free will of the human person which make one a responsible cause of one's own action. It is not the brain processes causing consciousness as the physicalists would argue. Invariably, Clarke and Lowe are on the same page that the human person as substance, not the physical components alone, possesses causal power and liability. Consciousness is important here because to reasonably impute an action to an individual, that individual must have performed the action consciously and freely; otherwise, it might become an act of man which ordinarily carries no responsibility because it is seen as an unconscious act or non-free act. Such actions are regarded as accidental actions of the individual from which it emanates never fully intended or willed it. By implication, the will or free will works with consciousness in causing a responsible and imputable action, or they are interwoven.

³¹ W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), 27–28.

³² Clarke, *Person and Being*, 27. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 29–43. Clarke also describes the human conscience as a privileged manifestation of our personhood. Cf. W. Norris Clarke, "Conscience and the Person," in *The Creative Retrieval of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

Continuing with person A slapping person B, for this action to be really imputable to A, A must have consciously performed that action and must have acted freely. This seems to suggest that it might be possible for A to act consciously but not freely, but I will not go into the argument on whether consciousness and free will are compatible or not. My focus here is to state how imputability as such is applicable only to free agents as substances like the human person who acts freely as a conscious master of one's action. If the action of A slapping B had not emanated from A as a responsible master of one's action, then such an action would be difficult to be imputed to A. Such action could be described as an act of man, rather than a human action, which is not ordinarily imputable. If the occasion arises that A has to defend him-/herself from such action, A could try to exonerate him-/herself by arguing that his/her hand was moved unintentionally to B's face. Unintentional here means unwillingly. In this case, A is blaming the hand or the movement of the hand but not actually oneself. By "oneself," I mean here what I described above as the subsisting unity of the human person. In this blame against the hand, the hand here is seen not as this subsisting unity of the human person but only as a physical part. It could also be described as the physical part or property of the human person A.

Furthermore, A could admit that A slapped B but argue that A did not intend it. Probably A intended to slap C but ended up slapping B. In this case, A was conscious of slapping freely but ended up not slapping the intended target, C. So, since A's slapping of B was unintended, such action could be difficult to impute on him/her as such. A could as well argue that even though A slapped B, A's *spirit* did not accept it. This implies that A did not do it freely. A's spirit then might be said to comprise A's entire being as subsisting unity or substance of which A's hand is only a part. A's spirit is neither the hand that slapped B nor the brain process that led to the slapping. A might argue that something prompted A to slap B. The thing that prompted A might be unexplained internal or external processes but that A's spirit rejected it. In this case, the thing that prompted A is not this subsisting unity because A is referring to it not as A's being but as something that exerts influence on A's being. It might be A's brain processes or the central nervous system that physicalists would regard as the cause of such action since for them they possess causal power. But A's expression suggests that those processes are simply components of A, but not A's entire being as a subsisting unity. A's expression suggests that those processes are not causes as such but only components of causes. If A refers to them as the cause of the slap, it means that A has the intention to exonerate him-/herself by imputing the

action to components that are not really him-/herself. In fact, such analysis suggests that whenever A wants to argue that A is not the cause of an action actually performed, A tries to impute such action to a physical part or state or to mental state of A's being, or to an external cause with the conviction that such part or state or external cause refers to something outside A's being or substance as a person. Hence, A is not actually responsible for the action. So, it is a way of exonerating oneself from an action one actually performed. Therefore, an action is imputable only to an agent as a subsisting unity that possesses free will such as the human person because only such subsisting unity, not the physical states, has the causal power to responsibly initiate an action.

Conclusion

I have tried to argue that, in the human person, it is only the substance that has causal power, not the brain processes or the central nervous system, or any physical component as physicalists argue. The substance understood as the underlying entity in Aristotle possesses causal power as a subsisting unity. The physical components such as the brain processes or the central nervous system or any physical state cannot be the cause of human action because they possess no causal power and liability. Those components cannot be held responsible for the human action, that is, the action cannot be imputed on those individual human components. If those components or states are the actual causes of the action, as the physicalists would argue, their action should be imputable to them not to the human person as a subsistent unity. Actions are imputable to the human person as substance or a subsisting unity, in Aristotelian terms, who possesses causal power and liability, and which is not composed of its parts, and the parts do not possess causal power or liability.³³ Thus, parts cannot be the cause of human actions as such. Therefore, the causal power of substance, especially the substance of the human person, is better understood as the power possessed only by the individual substance endowed with the exercise of reason and free will by which one initiates an action that is imputable to the person in question.

*Department of Philosophy
Bigard Memorial Seminary, Nigeria*

³³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 10, 1035, 18b. Also, Lowe, for instance, emphasized that parts of a substance are not components with which it is composed of. Cf. Lowe, *Personal Agency*, 167–168.

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