

Moore's Truths About Causation and Responsibility: A Reply to Alexander and Ferzan

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Abstract In this response to the review of Moore, Causation and Responsibility, by Larry Alexander and Kimberly Ferzan, previously published in this journal, two issues are discussed. The first is whether causation, counterfactual dependence, moral blame, and culpability, are all scalar properties or relations, that is, matters of more-or-less rather than either-or. The second issue discussed is whether deontological moral obligation is best described as a prohibition against using another as a means, or rather, as a prohibition on an agent strongly causing a prohibited result that was not about to happen anyway while intending to do so.

Keywords Causation · Responsibility · Counterfactual dependence · Deontological duty · Scalarity · Intention

Introduction

In their recent book review in this journal (Alexander and Ferzan 2012), Alexander and Ferzan continue (Alexander 2011; Ferzan 2011) their friendly dialogue with me about my book, *Causation and Responsibility* (2009). Moreover, they do this despite their continued adherence to a thesis which, if true, would make both my book and their criticisms of it irrelevant to both moral responsibility and any criminal liability built upon it. For Alexander and Ferzan believe that causing the harm that you either tried to cause or knew you were risking, does not increase one's moral responsibility (over and against the responsibility one has by virtue of making the attempt or taking the risk). (Alexander et al. 2009, ch. 5) So they have no moral stake in how the conundrums of causation raised in my book are to be resolved. Indeed, their motivations are something of a spoiler's here, for if they can make those conundrums seem as intractable as possible, then they could add "incoherence" to their charge of "irrelevance" as they seek to boot causation out of the theory of responsibility.

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