

## Aristotle and Powers Theories of Action

Bryan Reece  
University of Toronto

Aristotle thinks that action is a species of self-movement. A self-moving agent is the efficient cause of her action when she actualizes a rational power of hers. An agent's pro-attitudes are formal causes of her action, being what provides the paradigm for the action and part of the definition of the sort of actualization that the action is. Most have not interpreted Aristotle this way, but have instead attributed to him the Davidsonian idea that pro-attitudes or events involving them are the efficient causes of actions. Those who have a powers-based theory of action are closer to Aristotle on this score. However, they make certain assumptions that Aristotle does not, and these assumptions in some cases put their views at a disadvantage with respect to Aristotle's in responding to Davidsonian challenges.