

2001

Is Intending Causally Related to Foreseeing?

Kevin Twain Lowery

Olivet Nazarene University, klowery@olivet.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/phil_facp



Part of the [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lowery, Kevin Twain, "Is Intending Causally Related to Foreseeing?" (2001). *Faculty Scholarship - Philosophy*. 1.
https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/phil_facp/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy at Digital Commons @ Olivet. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship - Philosophy by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Olivet. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@olivet.edu.

Is Intending Causally Related to Foreseeing?

Kevin Twain Lowery

Consequentialists often attempt to erase any distinction that might be made between fully intending something and merely foreseeing it as a side effect. In this paper, I argue that intent must extend to foresight when it exists. In this way, although foresight does not determine intent, it does shape it. Furthermore, the intersection of intent and foresight give rise to two other moral problems, namely: 1) the dilemma of intending harm as the means to a beneficial end and 2) the laudability/culpability an agent may have for side effects (both intended and unintended) that are produced by the agent's action. An attempt will be made to resolve these questions in terms of causality.

Intending vs. Foreseeing Harm

When we say that the agent *intends* something, we are indicating that the agent desires it. In terms of causality, the agent desires that a specific effect will be produced. This desire leads the agent to decide upon the course of action, i.e. the will is exercised to perform the action. In fact, it is inconceivable that the will could be exercised without any intent at all, else human beings would be nothing more than automatons. Yet we still ascribe to animals a type of will, one that is guided by instinct. However, since animals are incapable of the higher reasoning that humans possess, their will is nothing more than sheer desire. So it is still not inconsistent to say that animals can possess some type of intent. Consequently, any act of will (regardless of whether it is also guided by higher reasoning or is merely instinct) must include some element of intent. Therefore, with regard to the exercise of human will, there must be enough intent so that the agent would

be willing to at least accept the possibility of the effect being produced, i.e. the agent must at least be willing to risk the effect. Otherwise, the choice would not be made. Even if the particular effect is not desired as an end, it is at least desired either as the means to another end or as the by-product of another end. The moral legitimacy of these possibilities will be taken up in later sections.

Since intent reflects the agent's desires and reasoning, it essentially represents the agent's set of values. In contrast, *foresight* is produced solely by knowledge and is not dependent on the agent's intent, for the agent may foresee certain results, even when they are not intended or desired. Hence, to say that the agent *foresees* something is to claim that the agent possesses sufficient knowledge to recognize the possibility of a specific effect being produced. Nevertheless, the agent's ability to foresee a specific effect being produced does not necessarily entail the agent intending it. As was already pointed out, intent is ultimately driven by the agent's value system. Albeit, a distinction must now be made between the desire to see an effect produced and the intention of the will to cause the action(s) that lead(s) to that effect. Not all things that are desired are intended, but nothing can be intended unless it is desired to some degree.

In and of themselves, neither desire nor foresight are causal. Rather, the causality of human action starts with intent, i.e. the will decides to take the course of action that it believes will produce the desired effect(s). It becomes apparent that even though foresight does not cause intent to occur, it does shape intent, for once the mind recognizes the possibility of specific effect(s) being produced by a particular action, that action cannot be intended unless the agent is willing to risk the effect being produced. It may be the circumstance that an undesirable effect is foreseen and is merely a *side effect* of the

ultimate effect the agent intends as an end. In this case, while the agent does not desire the side effect in and of itself, the agent is still willing to risk the side effect taking place. Evidently, the agent values the desired effect sufficiently to offset any aversions that she may have toward the side effect. The bottom line is that the intent to pursue a course of action pertains not only to the desired end but also to the undesired side effects. Agents cannot create custom-made actions that only produce the desired elements. In every decision he makes, the agent must intend the risk of undesirable effects being produced, even if this risk is miniscule.

Although the presence of foresight does not necessitate intent, foresight does shape intent, for it changes the nature of the decision to be made. The validity of the foresight is irrelevant to the decision at hand, since the agent perceives her foresight to be correct, unless she is an utter skeptic and lives in constant self-doubt, in which case the will becomes paralyzed. Assuming that this is not the case, the agent trusts her foresight and exercises her will in that light. After the validity of the foresight is tested, the resulting knowledge will be factored into the agent's foresight. If the agent is to be rational (i.e. utilizing reason), then she must have some reason to believe that the desired effect can actually be produced. Hence, the rational exercise of will is determined by both intent and foresight of the desired end. If choice is to be rational (i.e. based on reason), the mind must at least foresee the possibility of the end being actualized, even when particular side effects remain unforeseen.

Since knowledge varies in degree, so does foresight. This variability of foresight causes intent to also be shaped in varying degrees. At the highest level of foresight, the will *fully intends* the action, i.e. it decides to cause the effect. The mind is informed as to

what decisions it can make and as to the consequences that will follow each decision.

With this knowledge in place, the mind comes to favor the cause and effect of a particular response (even if it is only slightly favored), after which it decides to implement the response. In the case of fully intending, the mind believes that a particular result will follow the chosen course of action, and it decides to initiate the cause on that basis.

In many instances, knowledge may not be so certain. After weighing the various options, it may not be clear as to what effects will be produced by various choices. Nevertheless, there is an awareness that specific effects are possible, even if those possibilities are slim. The mind cannot fully intend the effect, but it still intends it to a lesser degree. Foreseeing the possibility that specific effects might be produced by the cause, the decision is made when the agent is willing to risk causing them.

There are also times when the agent is in a state of *ignorance*, unaware of effects that will be the result of a specific decision. In these cases, the agent decides on particular responses but cannot make decisions regarding effects of which she is ignorant. This is not to say that the agent is necessarily in a state of utter ignorance. On the contrary, it is often the case that decisions are made in which the agent is informed regarding some effects and ignorant of others.

Now that ignorance has entered the mix, an immediate problem arises. In the first two scenarios, where the mind is informed sufficiently to be able to at least foresee (if not fully intend) the effect, it is clear that the intent is the initiatory cause that leads to the effect being produced. Hence, the agent can be praised for choosing a beneficial effect and blamed for choosing a harmful effect. Assigning praise or blame to acts of ignorance is not so clear cut, since the outcome is different from what was expected. Are we to

evaluate the intent, the effect, or both? Although this matter will be addressed in the final section, it would be appropriate to consider a small example for the time being.

Suppose Billy knows that his mother uses bleach to take stains out of his clothes. One day, Billy decides to help Mommy with the laundry. He discovers one of Dad's new shirts with a stain on the front, so he attempts to remove the stain by pouring undiluted bleach on it. As a result, the color is bleached out of a huge spot on the shirt, and the shirt is ruined. Is Billy to be praised, blamed, or both?

The matter of ascribing praise and blame seems to rest with expectations. We know that our actions (excluding involuntary and reflex actions) occur as a result of our intentions. We also know that there is a general expectation to promote the good. Consequently, we expect that our *intentions* should seek to promote the good. Even though Billy's ignorance prevented his intentions from actually producing good, we hope that Billy will become more informed and thus more successful at producing the types of effects he intends (again we hope that they are good ones). All in all, we praise Billy for intending something good, for we believe that his ignorance can eventually be overcome and thus make his intentions more effective.

However, Billy will only become more informed as he learns more about how specific causes lead to specific effects. In this case, he must learn that bleach must be diluted, else it will remove not only stains, but colors as well. Moreover, Billy did cause Dad's shirt to be ruined, so he is to be blamed. Had Billy known, though, that the shirt would be ruined, he would never have chosen to bleach it. What we have now put our finger on is the fact that the exercise of Billy's will was very contingent, and this contingency is due to ignorance. In fact, the more ignorant the will is, the more

contingent its exercise will be. Inversely, knowledge decreases contingency, because knowledge solidifies our choices. In a state of utter ignorance, the effect cannot be chosen, even though it may still be caused. Naturally, the analysis made here assumes that human desires are not random but have some semblance of order, else it would be difficult to conceive human will as anything but random.

In another example, Eloise drives her car down the road, unaware of a faulty tire that will blow out and cause her to wreck in the lake. Had she known the state of the tire, she would not have driven by the lake, if she had even driven on the tire at all. Eloise's will is highly contingent, i.e. very susceptible to change. Now suppose that Eloise is aware that the tires need to be replaced, but she decides to take the risk and drive anyway. In this case, she foresees wrecking, and the exercise of her will is less contingent. However, let us increase Eloise's knowledge even more. This time, Eloise knows that her tire will blow out. In fact, she wants it to blow out so that she can commit suicide and make it look like an accident. With the added knowledge about the tire blowing out, the *choice* to drive on it becomes even less contingent, i.e. it is highly unlikely that Eloise will change her mind.

This clearly illustrates the fact that a cause becomes greater as it becomes less contingent. Therefore, the ability of Eloise's will to cause the blowout of the tire increases with her knowledge, i.e. the more she knows, the more she causes the blowout. The general principle becomes apparent here. The greater the level of intent is, the less contingent the exercise of the will is, and the greater its causation will be. It becomes apparent that foreseeing is not different in kind from intending, it is just holds a lower place on the same scale. We consider a person as fully praiseworthy or blameworthy

whenever she intends to produce an effect that is *foreseen as inevitable*. In contrast, merely *foreseeing the possibility or probability* of an effect being produced does not remove praise and blame altogether, it only reduces them.

This explanation of the contingency of the will is another way to clarify Nietzsche's contention that knowledge is power. Knowledge does give us more control over the exercise of our will, not always in the sense that we are better able to exercise it, but more generally in the sense that in exercising it we are better able to cause the effects we desire. Praise and blame are consequently ascribed to the extent that the agent has control of the situation. If circumstances do not allow the agent very much control of the outcome, then very little praise or blame can be given. On the other hand, an agent with a high level of control (i.e. low contingency) is a greater cause of the effect and receives a high level of praise or blame.

Part of the control that an agent has in a given situation is due to his knowledge. Suppose Billy was able to read the warning on the bleach bottle label, and suppose that he could have asked for help from his mother, who was in the next room. In light of these facts, we must conclude that Billy could have known better but had made an earlier decision to remain ignorant. What if Billy's mother had warned him some time before to never use bleach without reading the label? His decision to remain ignorant is even greater, because now he has acquired knowledge of his own ignorance. Thus, his decision to be ignorant becomes less contingent and a greater cause of his exercise of will. As a result, his condition of ignorance becomes less contingent since he chose it, and now his actions cannot be exonerated by the mere presence of ignorance, and he more greatly causes the shirt to be ruined (i.e. indirectly through the decision to be ignorant).

In conclusion, it seems that intent and foresight are causally related in a limited way. Since foresight arises from knowledge, it is not dependent on intent. In contrast, while intent is not determined by foresight, it is indeed shaped by it, for the intent to pursue a course of action necessarily accounts for all foreseeable effects that may be produced in the process. The reason that intent is not determined by foresight is that intent is ultimately derived from the agent's desires, and these reflect a system of values.

Categorizing Causation

In order to evaluate the two moral problems identified in the preceding section, it will be beneficial to describe them in terms of causality. This can be accomplished by categorizing causation in several ways.

The Contingency of Causes

First of all, causes can be classified according to their contingency. In some causes, the consequents always follow the antecedents, making them *definite* causes. In contrast, if some other condition or set of conditions must be met before the effect is produced, then the cause is a *contingent* one. Contingency occurs in degrees but definiteness does not, for a definite cause is one with no contingency whatsoever. Causes can derive their contingency from a number of factors, but three are worth mentioning. First, *chance* is the purest form of contingency, for it cannot be controlled externally. Second, *complexity* increases the contingency of an event, for each element of the event introduces its own contingency and adds to the overall contingency. Third, *human will*

adds contingency since it is either grounded in transcendental freedom or the result of complex causes that create a façade of transcendental freedom as an epiphenomenon.¹

Intuitively, a cause is weakened as it becomes more contingent. Basically, a definite cause is the strongest type of cause because it claims that something *must* happen, whereas a contingent cause can only say that it *might* happen. In effect, definiteness is stronger than mere probability, and the more probable the effect becomes, the stronger the cause is. In the end, contingency opposes the strength of the cause.

The Directness of Causes

Causes can also be either *direct* or *indirect*. Whenever a cause is separated from the effect by at least one other cause, it is an *indirect* cause. On the other hand, a *direct* cause immediately produces the effect, i.e. it requires no intermediate causes. As such, running a car off of the road would be a more direct way to cause an accident than sabotaging a car would be.

The less direct a cause becomes, the more contingent it becomes. This is due to the fact that the intermediate cause(s) introduce more contingency. Hence, a direct cause is greater than an indirect cause. This is why forcing an automobile off of the road is generally worse than cutting the brake lines, for the victim has more of a chance to escape the fate in the latter case.

¹ Human will either transcends natural causes to some extent or is wholly determined by them. If human will is determined externally, then it seems to be a complex cause. Either way, it appears to be significantly contingent.

The Sufficiency of Causes

Often, an effect is produced by a series or chain of causes. If the chain is caused by a single cause, then that cause can be said to be a *sufficient* cause of the effect, i.e. it sufficiently started the process. On the other hand, if a particular cause cannot initiate the process alone, then it is called an *insufficient* cause. For example, playing a song on the trumpet is dependent on several factors (vibrating the lips, depressing the valves, blowing air, “tonguing” the notes), none of which is sufficient to produce the notes by itself. In contrast, rolling a bowling ball down the alley is a sufficient cause of knocking the pins down.

By definition, a sufficient cause is able to produce the final effect to a greater extent than the insufficient cause, since it does not require any assistance in initiating the causal chain. Moreover, the sufficient cause is less contingent. Insufficient causes require additional causes to produce their effects. These additional causes also have to be insufficient causes, else the first cause wouldn’t be needed at all. Obviously, insufficient causes are contingent, for they cannot be definite. The insufficient cause and its helper(s) become a combination of contingent causes, producing an even higher degree of contingency. For this reason, not only is the insufficient cause more contingent than the sufficient cause to start with, it becomes even more contingent as it is connected with other insufficient causes. Insufficient causes are unable to produce the same level of causality as sufficient causes.

Intending Ends and Means

The previous discussion indicates that even when the mind is not certain that a particular choice will produce a corresponding effect, it may still recognize the possibility of such and make the choice anyway. Although the effect in question cannot be fully embraced (since an inadequacy of knowledge will not allow such), the will still chooses to risk the effect taking place. In other words, whenever knowledge is not sufficient to permit the will to fully intend an effect, the mind may still foresee the effect and choose to take the accompanying risk. All in all, fully intending and foreseeing (as merely possible) differ only in degree, for they are both ways of measuring the scale of intent.² Henceforth, I will use the general term *intend* to include either of the characterizations (i.e. fully intend and foresee). In this way, to say that something is intended is to say that the mind is at least willing to risk the effect taking place.

It is possible to see that an effect may be willed either as an end or as the means to another end. Whenever something is intended as an end, it is willed to be the ultimate effect in an event or process. The ultimate effect will often be the final effect, but this is not always so, because the desired effect may be followed by subsequent repercussive effects. For example, Tonya wants to be a country music star, ultimately producing a gold record. She accomplishes that goal, but the gold record has catapulted her popularity to the point of losing her privacy unless she stays in seclusion. The gold record was the ultimate goal even though other effects were produced afterwards. Therefore, when something is willed as an ultimate effect, it is essentially the primary object of desire within the given event or process.

² A cogent account intent and assent can be found in John Henry Newman, *A Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

And yet, it is many times true that the agent desires a set of effects as an end. These do not have to occur at the same time for them to be willed as a group. In one sense, each of them can be considered as an ultimate end, but the agent will not be satisfied until all of them are accomplished. Essentially, completing the list *is* the agent's ultimate desire. Each item, as important as it may be, is reduced to being a contributor to the ultimate effect. Even though they can be regarded as ends in and of themselves, the individual items on the list become means to another ultimate end.

Now let us suppose that Tonya knows for certain that in order for her to achieve her goal she must move to Nashville and leave her extended family behind in Montana. Furthermore, she realizes the possibility that her rise to fame might cause some other singer's career to plummet. Sure enough, both of these take place. She moves to Nashville and becomes a star. Tonya's style is very similar to that of Dixie Warbler, and as Tonya rises to stardom, many of Dixie's fans start listening to Tonya's music and Dixie's career is severely damaged. Tonya fully intended to move to Nashville, yet she only foresaw the possibility of hurting Dixie's career. However, in deciding to proceed with her career she causes both effects. Therefore, any time intention is present, the initiatory cause that eventually leads to the effect rests in the decision, i.e. the exercise of the will. This is true regardless of whether the effect is intended as an end or whether it is intended as a means to another end.

Remembering that there exists a general moral requirement to promote the good, the agent must intend beneficial ends, not harmful ones. There is no problem in intending a beneficial effect as the means to another beneficial end. In contrast, intending a harmful effect as the means to a beneficial end is not so patently acceptable. Obviously, if the

negative value of the means outweighs the positive value of the end, then the overall balance of effects is negative and the end should not be pursued. Albeit, we even find it difficult to pursue an end when the overall balance of effects is neutral, i.e. the benefit and harm are of equal weight. Not only that, we still have difficulty endorsing the pursuit of an end even when the good outweighs the bad.

How can this be? No matter how we look at it, the end should always be greater than the means, for the choice of the means is dependent upon the choice of the end. In other words, the agent can only will the means if the end has already been willed. Conversely, willing the end does not necessitate willing a particular means, for a particular end may often be pursued through a number of means. For any given effect, its status as a means is generated by the presence of an end. The end is indeed greater than the means, but this still does not answer the question as to whether or not the end justifies the means.

First of all, the answer is not to be found by suggesting that intending harm is always illegitimate. Some employ deontological systems to make such a claim, but this is difficult to maintain, even on an intuitive level. For example, it seems ludicrous to suggest that the harm of telling one lie always outweighs the benefit of saving a million lives. Therefore, what is currently under investigation is not a comparison between good and evil. Rather, the real concern is whether a beneficial end is illegitimated by a harmful means.

Not only do various ethical systems aptly condemn intending harm, this same reluctance seems to be natural to human intuition. First, there are the arguments of reciprocity like the Golden Rule or Kant's Categorical Imperative. There is something to

be said here, for each of us realizes that when we legitimize intending harm to others, we also legitimize others intending harm to us, a result we do not savor. Second, situations in which the good can only be pursued through harmful means seem to be rare exceptions. More often than not, the general nature of good and evil is such that good can be pursued through beneficial means. Third, some effects can be reversed, but others cannot. This tends to make us apprehensive of intending harm, even in the pursuit of a greater good. Fourth, intending harm tends to affect our reputation, because it erodes the trust that other place in us. As a general rule, trust is built gradually, but it is extremely difficult to rebuild once it has been destroyed. Fifth, intending harm can hinder our ability to procure the cooperation of others, also due to a lack of trust. Sixth, intending harm has a potentially detrimental influence on others, especially those who are less able to make finer moral distinctions (e.g. children, etc.).

All of these reasons are intuitive. As such, they provide us with strong reasons to oppose intending harm in general, yet they still do not give us sufficient reason to rule out the exceptional cases (e.g. lying to save the lives of a million people). It does not appear that causality will be able to make this judgment. I repeat an assertion made earlier, namely, that praise and blame are determined by expectations, and this seems to ultimately be a matter of values. What causality does make clear is that intending a harmful means to a beneficial end is neither wholly good nor wholly bad. It is both. Since the agent is responsible for causing both benefit and harm, the agent is ultimately to be praised and blamed. This is why we generally work diligently to find beneficial means to produce beneficial ends, even though utilizing a harmful means is often more convenient. For instance, if a thousand dollars were to be given to famine relief, it might be more

convenient to steal it rather than to acquire it in a non-harmful way. In the end, causality illustrates the fact that using harm for another good is both laudable and blamable. The end does not justify the means, for they must both stand on their own merits or demerits. The final evaluation must come from a source besides causality.

Side Effects

Generally speaking, a side effect is an effect produced in the pursuit of an ultimate end that does not contribute to that end. It could be that an intermediate cause produces more than one effect (as it often does), and at least one of these effects contributes to the ultimate end. Meanwhile other effects are produced but do not contribute to the ultimate end. These are the side effects. Shelly Kagan asks us to contrast the following two cases.

- A. In an effort to free my backyard of mosquitoes, I release a gas bomb—foreseeing that the poisonous fumes will waft into the home of my immovable invalid neighbor, causing his death.
- B. Killing the mosquitoes does not threaten my neighbor at all—but I realize that had I sent the money with which I purchased the smoke bomb to famine relief instead, some individual who will now die would have been saved.³

Kagan concludes that these two scenarios are morally equivalent since someone's death can be foreseen in both cases. He categorizes the deaths as *side effects*. I would more specifically refer to them as *intended side effects*.

It seems that killing my neighbor by fumigation is a greater cause than is allowing an unknown person to starve to death. First, the cause is more direct, so it is greater. My

³ Kagan, *The Limits of Morality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 154.

neighbor's fate rests entirely within my hands, but the same is not true of the starving person. I cannot put food in the starving person's mouth. I can only feed the hungry indirectly. Next, gassing my neighbor is also less contingent. In contributing to famine relief, my money might not reach its destination, the person might starve for other reasons, or some great philanthropist might save the starving person for me. The higher contingency of feeding the starving person makes it a lesser cause than fumigating my neighbor.

Also, the plight of the starving person is not only in my hands, it is in the hands of millions like me. They assume, right along with me, the risk of people starving. It is evident that while none of us causes the person to starve, each of us shares in causing the starving person to not be fed.⁴ Each person's decision to not send money is a partial cause of the starving person's fate. However, some are better able to feed the starving, seeing that they possess greater resources. If the starving person is not fed, those with greater means contribute more to the cause.⁵ Basically, each agent causes the starving person to not be fed according to her share of the total resources of the group.

In conclusion, I do not cause people to starve, but I cause them to not be fed according to the relative strength of my resources in comparison to the total resources available to this end. I do share a part of the blame, but it is only a fraction of what I would bear if I fumigated my neighbor. When this conclusion is added to those made earlier, it can be seen that intended side effects, both those that are fully intended and

⁴ These two statements are not equivalent, for one refers to the cause of death while the other refers to a counter-cause that opposes the cause of death.

⁵ As the agent's resources increase, she is better able to produce the counter-cause of saving the person from starvation. As such, the causality of her action becomes less contingent and she contributes more to the overall counter-cause.

those that are foreseen (as merely possible), are still caused by the agent, although the degree of causality is determined, at least in part, by the strength of the intent.

Unintended side effects either contribute to the ultimate end or they do not. Since we are working within the confines of the general requirement to pursue the good, the ultimate end will always aim for a beneficial effect. If an agent would happen to produce an unintended side effect that actually contributes to the ultimate end, then the effect will be beneficial. We do not need to worry about these serendipities. Even if the unintended side effect does not contribute to the ultimate end, but is still beneficial, it is not a problem that requires attention.

In contrast, the harmful unintended side effect is somewhat dilemmatic. Without rehashing the earlier discussion on unintended effects, let us nuance the argument a bit through an example. Daphne invites her friends over for dinner and prepares a seafood feast. Unbeknownst to her, the seafood is spoiled and her friends all get food poisoning. Should Daphne be blamed? It is clear that her actions cause the effect (food poisoning) but her intent does not.

But is it so clear? We could say that since Daphne intended to serve the seafood, her intention does in fact cause the food poisoning. To untangle this mess, it will be necessary to invoke the category of human control, for we want to say that Daphne can only be blamed to the extent that the outcome was within her control. At the most basic level, human control requires knowledge (else actions will be contingent) and the ability to alter the course of events (through words, actions, etc.)

If Daphne discovers that the seafood is spoiled before she serves it, then she can serve something else. If she discovers this fact soon after the seafood has been eaten, she

cannot prevent food poisoning from occurring, but there is still time for her guests to have their stomachs pumped. If Daphne only discovers the food poisoning after it shows up in an autopsy report, she might be in deep trouble. Notice that in each case, knowledge of the fact enables Daphne to act, but her ability to alter the course of events has certain limits. If we locate blame beyond the realm of Daphne's control, then she is off the hook. Nevertheless, her intent still needs to be rescued.

It seems that Daphne's intent must be more clearly defined, for it was not her wish to just serve seafood regardless of the consequences. Instead, Daphne's intent was not only to serve seafood to her friends, but she also intended that it would be delicious and satisfying. When all things are considered, the spoilage of the seafood actually thwarts Daphne's intentions rather than fulfills them. The fact that Daphne's intentions can be thwarted in this case proves that they are an insufficient cause. In other words, Daphne cannot guarantee that her intentions will be met on their own. At least one other factor comes into play: the condition of the seafood.

If the seafood itself is spoiled, then there must be a reason. It could be a refrigerator malfunction, neglect of the retailer, or some other cause. (Here we assume that Daphne does nothing to cause the spoilage herself, else she truly is to blame.) Whatever the cause of the spoilage, this new cause intersects Daphne's cause of preparing and serving the seafood. The final effect of food poisoning is the product of two causes, one that Daphne causes and one that she doesn't. Again, we come back to the premise that Daphne should only be responsible within the realm of her control.

The skeptic is still not satisfied, but contends that if Daphne doesn't serve the spoiled seafood, then no food poisoning will occur. Yes, but even if that were true, the

seafood would still be spoiled. The food poisoning only occurs as the effect of two insufficient causes: spoilage and serving. However, isn't it true that restaurants are liable for serving spoiled food? Yes, but if the restaurant does not cause the spoilage and is unaware of it, the reason that the customer may make a claim against the restaurant is primarily for the purpose of reducing litigation. If the supplier provides a spoiled product to the restaurant, then the restaurant has a claim against the supplier. This chain continues back all the way to the initial cause of the spoilage, then the buck must stop there.

In fact, the victim of food poisoning has a claim against those who cause the spoilage, but the claim is settled indirectly through the successive parties who transferred the spoiled food to the customer in the first place. The claim is handled in this way not only to reduce litigation, but to prevent "passing the buck," i.e. refusing to accept responsibility by blaming somebody else. Otherwise, the restaurant would blame the supplier, the supplier would blame its supplier, and so forth, and the customer would essentially lose all hope of being compensated.

Daphne's intention does not sufficiently cause food poisoning. Her intention causes an action (serving) that links another cause (spoilage) with hers. Her action causes the food to be served, but another cause, which she does not initiate, is necessary for food poisoning to occur. Therefore, since she does not sufficiently cause the food poisoning (i.e. it is at least partially outside her control) and since she does not intend it, she is not to be blamed. Of course, we are assuming: 1) the expected probability, under normal circumstances, of Daphne's guests getting food poisoning from eating her seafood is low and 2) she has done all that can reasonably be expected to prevent food poisoning from occurring.

When all is said and done, we still conclude that Daphne can only be blamed to the extent that she could control the outcome. In effect, laudability and culpability for doing and allowing harm, and for intending and foreseeing harm, are gauged by the agent's ability to initiate causes that alter the course of events.