

PHIL 858
Causation
Spring 2004
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Introduction:

Causal claims are ubiquitous. We think, for example, that smoking causes cancer. Or, perhaps, that President Bush's tax policies caused the current budget deficit. In these examples the word 'cause' appears explicitly. But often we also express what we take to be causal relationships through other locutions: Jill's throwing of the stone *broke* the window. The tree fell over, *because* the winds were very strong and the soil was water-logged.

Thus, causal thinking is utterly familiar to us. Yet philosophically the concept of cause might appear rather mysterious. How do we form causal judgments? How do we justify causal claims? Is there 'room' for the notion of cause in a fundamentally physical world? What are the relata of the causal relation? What is the relation between singular and general causal claims? What is the relation between causes and counterfactuals? What the relation between the notion of cause and those of intervention and agency? What, that is, is the source of the causal asymmetry? In this seminar we will address a smorgasbord of these issue.

Rough schedule of topics:

The seminar will have two parts. During the first part we will read some of the classic literature on causation to get an overview of the main philosophical accounts. During the second part we will read some very recent literature on causation focusing on (a subset of the following) three topics: *i*) Recent assessments of the prospects of 'Lewis-style' counterfactual analyses of causation. *ii*) Causal modeling and manipulability accounts of causation. *iii*) Attempts to derive the asymmetry of causes and counterfactuals from the famous entropy asymmetry exhibited by thermodynamical systems. How much time we spend on these topics depends partly on the interests of the seminar participants.

Readings:

- Price, Huw and Richard Corry editors. *Causation Physics, and the Constitution of Reality*. Oxford UP (2007). ISBN13: 9780199278190
- Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley (eds.), *Causation* (Oxford Readings in Philosophy) ISBN 0198750943.
- John Collins, Ned Hall, and L.A. Paul (eds.), *Causation and Counterfactuals*. ISBN 0262532565.

Several of the Readings can be found in The majority of readings for the second half of the term is available electronically.

1) Hume's view of causation. (Was Hume a Humean?)

Hume, David. *Treatise*, Book I, Part III

Hume, D. *Enquiry*, Sections I-VII

Papers by Stroud, Strawson, Winkler, Blackburn in *The New-Hume Debate*

Strawson, Galen. *The Secret Connexion*. Chapters 1-5, 6.4-6.8, 12.1, 16-22
 Mackie, *The Cement of the Universe*, Ch.1.
 Horwich, Paul, *Asymmetries in Time*, Ch. 8.

2) **Regularity Theories**

Mackie, J. L. "Causes and Condition"
 Mackie, J.L. *Cement of the Universe*. Ch.2
 Scriven, Michael. "Defects of the Necessary Condition Analysis of Causation,"
 Anscombe, G.E.M., "Causality and Determination"

3) **Lewis's Counterfactual Analysis of Causation (I)**

Lewis, David. "Causation"
 Lewis, D. "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow"
 Kim, Jaegwon, "Causes and Counterfactuals"
 Horwich, Paul, *Asymmetries in Time*, Ch. 10.5
 Collins, John, Ned Hall, and L. A. Paul "Counterfactuals and Causation: History, Problems, and Prospects"

4) **Probabilistic Causality**

Salmon, Wesley. "Probabilistic Causality"
 Eells, Ellery, *Probabilistic Causality*, ch. 1, Appendix 1 and 2
 (<http://philosophy.wisc.edu/960/ap1.htm> and <http://philosophy.wisc.edu/960/ap2.htm>)
 Hitchcock, Chris, "The Mishap at Reichenbach Falls"

5) **Process Theories of Causation**

Salmon, "Production and Propagation"
 Dowe, Phil 1992. "Wesley Salmon's Process Theory of Causality and the Conserved Quantity Theory", *Philosophy of Science* 59: 195-216.
 Lewis, "Void and Object"

6) **Russell on the notion of cause and Field's Problem**

Russell, Bertrand. "On the Notion of Cause" *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, 13 (1912-13)
 Latham, Noa. "Singular Causal Statements and Strict Deterministic Laws," *Pac. Phil. Quart.* 68 (1987)
 Cartwright, Nancy. "Causal Laws and Effective Strategies," *Nous* 13 (1979), repr. in *How the Laws of Physics Lie*
 Field, Hartry. "Causation"
 Hitchcock, Christopher. "What Russell Got Right"
 Eagle, Antony, "Pragmatic Causation"

7) **Agency and Causation**

Menzies Peter and Huw Price. "Causation as Secondary Quality" *BJPS* 44, 1993
 Price, Huw. "Agency and Probabilistic Causality" *BJPS* 42, 1991
 Price, Huw, "Agency and Causal Asymmetry", *Mind*, Vol. 101, pp. 501–520. 1992
 Von Wright, "On the Logic and Epistemology of the Causal Relation"

Hausman, Daniel. *Causal Asymmetries*, Ch. 5
 Arif Ahmed, "Agency and Causation"

8) Structural Equations and Manipulability Accounts of Causation

Pearl, Judea, *Causality* (selections)
 Woodward, James, *Making Things Happen* (selections)
 Hausman, Dan, *Causal Asymmetries* (selections)

9) Lewis's Counterfactual Analysis of Causation (II)

Lewis, D., "Causation as Influence"
 (Other papers from Collins, Hall, Paul (eds.)
 Hitchcock, "Of Humean Bondage"

10) Causation as Folk Science

Norton, John, "Causation as Folk Science."

11) The Asymmetry of Causation

Elga, "Statistical Mechanics and the Asymmetry of Counterfactual Dependence."
 Frisch, "Lewis on Waves and Overdetermination."
 Albert, *Time and Chance* (excerpt)
 Loewer, "Counterfactuals and the Second Law"
 Frisch, "Counterfactuals and the Past Hypothesis"

Course Requirements:

Everyone taking the seminar for credit will be required to give two presentations. The goal of the presentations should be to introduce the weeks readings by summarizing the main arguments and asking some critical questions that can provide a lead-in for the discussions. The presentations will count for one third of the grade.

A term paper will be due at the last meeting of the term (date to be determined...). The paper should contain roughly 4000 to 5000 words (or be around 15 pages in a standard font). It can, but need not be, based on one of your presentations and should be a polished, well-argued, and well-researched piece of philosophy.