

Philosophy and Methods of the Social Sciences

Instructors

Cameron Macdonald & Don Tontiplaphol

Teaching Fellow

Tim Beaumont

Social Studies 40

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T&TH (10–11 AM)

Pound Hall #200

Lecture 15: Mar. 25

Causal Problems

Outline

- 1: The arc so far. . .
- 2: The counterfactual analysis of causation: the super-simple version
- 3: Resisting the counterfactual analysis
- 4: The counterfactual analysis: less simple versions
- 5: More resistance
- 6: Two concepts of causation?
- 7: Intentional agency: a distinct form of causality?

1:

The arc so far

The arc so far

- ▶ Explanation as causal
 - ▶ Holism v. Individualism (J&P; L&S; Elster)
 - ▶ RCT (Satz & Ferejohn)
 - ▶ Functionalist explanation (Cohen)
 - ▶ Theory of ideology (Rosen)
- ▶ Explanation as non-causal
 - ▶ The interpretation of action (Skinner; Winch)
 - ▶ Instrumentalism (Friedman)

The arc now

- ▶ Now: So what is causation, anyway?

2:

The counterfactual analysis of causation: the super-simple version

The super-simple version

Event A is a cause of event B if and only if B depends on A , in this sense: Were it the case that A hadn't occurred, B wouldn't have occurred.

Intuitively appealing?

Questions already

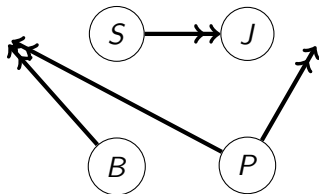
- ▶ Dependence
 - ▶ Necessary for causation?
 - ▶ Sufficient for causation?
- ▶ Counterfactual conditional, not material conditional
 - ▶ If I am not at the mall, the sun has set.
 - ▶ Were I not at the mall, the sun would have set.

Dependence as necessary

A is a cause of B only if B depends on A .

S-B #1 (early Lewis)

Bruno's throw is a cause of the jar's breaking only if the jar's breaking depends on Bruno's throw.



So: Given the necessity of dependence, *B* is not a cause of *J*. (Nor is *P*.)

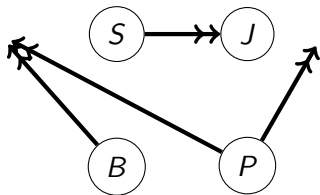
But: What about *S*?

Dependence as sufficient

A is a cause of B if B depends on A .

S-B #1 (early Lewis)

Sylvia's throw is a cause of the jar's breaking if the jar's breaking depends on Sylvia's throw.



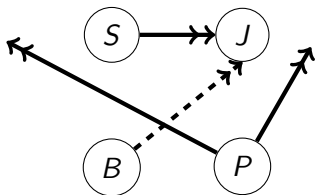
So: S is a cause of J .

But: Counterexamples?

3:

Resisting the counterfactual analysis

S-B #2 (Pre-emption)

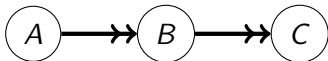


So: S is not supposed to be a cause, after all. If S had misfired, J would have happened, via B , anyway. (Or: B 's causation was *pre-empted* by S .)

And: B is not supposed to be a cause, either. If B had misfired, J would have happened, via S , anyway. So: J has no cause. (?!?!?)

But: We should mark S as a cause, whatever else we are to say.

More trouble

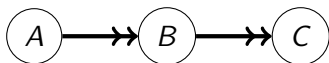


1. If no A , no C .
2. So: A is a cause of C .
3. But also: If no C , no A .
4. So: C is a cause of A . (?!?!?)

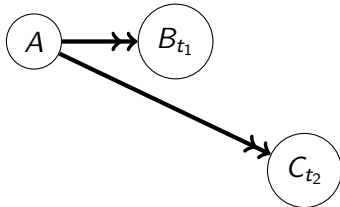
Ways out from this?

A possible way out?

“Causes must precede their effects.”



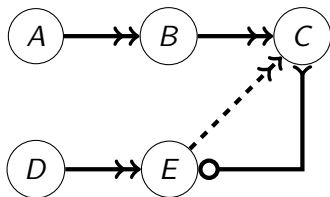
No go:



So: *B* causes *C*. (?!?!?)

Yet more trouble

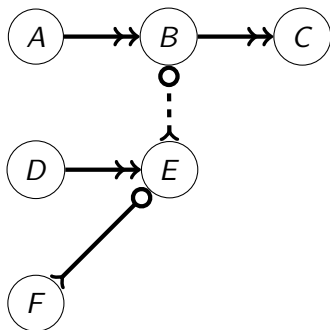
Late pre-emption:



Again, so: A is not a cause of C . (?!?!?)

Yet more trouble...

Double prevention (cf. Ned Hall):

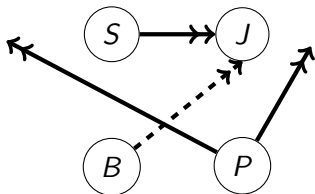


So: *F* is a cause of *C*. (?!?!?)

4:

The counterfactual analysis: less simple versions

S-B #3 (late Lewis)

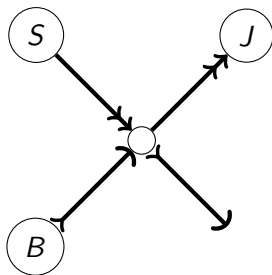


- ▶ If no S , then still J , but J would have been very different.
- ▶ So: If no S , then no J in such-and-such a manner.
- ▶ So: S is a cause of such-and-such form of J .
- ▶ Objections?

5:

More resistance

S-B #4 (Strevens)



So: If no S , still J in what would have been S 's manner.

So: S is not a cause of J .

Or: A fancy "Smart Rock" (cf. Ned Hall)...

6:

Two concepts of causation?

Two concepts (cf. Ned Hall)...

- ▶ Causation as dependence
 - the counterfactual analysis
 - “causal influence”
 - Jackson & Pettit; List & Spiekermann
- ▶ Causation as production
 - the sufficientarian analysis
 - “process-tracing”
 - Elster and MI?

7:

Intentional agency: a distinct form of causality?

A distinct *form of causality*

- ▶ Billiard balls v. actions
 - ▶ Action as intention
 - ▶ Intention as thought
 - ▶ Action as constituted (sometimes) by thought
 - ▶ Action as explained by thought—but non-causally
-
- ▶ But: Action as caused by thought in a distinctive sense of “cause”

