The Direction of Causation

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Time: 12th CitS Conference, Hoboken, June 2017
The Direction of Causation

Suppose $C$, $E$ are causally connected in the sense that either $C$ causes $E$ or $E$ causes $C$. What makes it the case that $C$ causes $E$ rather than $E$ causes $C$?
Careful readers have thought they could make sense of stories of time travel... speculative physicists have given serious consideration to tachyons, advanced potentials, and cosmological models with closed timelike curves. Most or all of these phenomena would involve special exceptions to the normal asymmetry of counterfactual dependence. It will not do to declare them impossible a priori.

David Hume

we may define a cause to be an object, followed by another, and where all the objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the second.

An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding 1748 Ch 7.
Advanced Potentials

Retrocausality in Quantum Mechanics

\[
\begin{align*}
S &\to A \\
\lambda &\to B \\
\lambda &\to T
\end{align*}
\]
Advanced Potentials

The Direction of Causation

Determinant: a minimal set of conditions jointly sufficient, given the laws of nature, for the fact in question.

Asymmetry of overdetermination

the cause exhibits an asymmetry of overdetermination in the direction of the effect
Independence

...“causal priority consists in the causal connection among effects of a common cause and the causal independence among the causes of a given effect.” p. 55

Causal Modelling

\[ A \perp C, \quad D \perp E | C \]

\[ A \bowtie E, \quad C \bowtie E, \quad C \bowtie D, \quad D \bowtie E \]
Causal Modelling

\[ A \rightarrow C \rightarrow B \]

\[ A \leftarrow C \leftarrow B \]

\[ A \perp C, \ C \perp B, \ A \perp B \]

\[ A \perp B|C \]
Independence

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Independence

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Unfaithfulness

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \rightarrow B \\
Kookaburras & \rightarrow \text{Snakes} \\
\text{Snakes} & \rightarrow C \\
B & \rightarrow \text{Mice}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
C \perp B, \quad A \perp B
\]

\[
A \perp C
\]
Independence

“Tokens are causally connected if they bear that relation to one another that typically issues in probabilistic dependencies between their types.” p. 58

Independence


Interventionism

\[ A \rightarrow C \rightarrow B \]

\[ A \leftarrow C \leftarrow B \]

\[ A \equiv C, \: C \equiv B, \: A \equiv B \]

\[ A \perp B | C \]
Interventionism

- $I$ causes $C$
- Surgical intervention
- Arrow breaking
- $I$ exogenous

Agency

...an event $A$ is a cause of a distinct event $B$ just in case bringing about the occurrence of $A$ would be an effective means by which a free agent could bring about the occurrence of $B$ (Menzies and Price 1993, 187).
Primitivism

The Direction of Causation

What makes it the case that $C$ causes $E$ rather than $E$ causes $C$?