Hunting Causes and Using Them

_Hunting Causes And Using Them_ argues that causation is not one thing, as commonly assumed, but many. There is a huge variety of causal relations, each with different characterizing features, different methods for discovery and different uses to which it can be put. In this collection of new and previously published essays, Nancy Cartwright provides a critical survey of philosophical and economic literature on causality, with a special focus on the currently fashionable Bayes-nets and invariance methods – and exposes a huge gap in that literature. Almost every account treats either exclusively of how to hunt causes or of how to use them. But where is the bridge between? It’s no good knowing how to warrant a causal claim if we don’t know what we can do with that claim once we have it.

This book is for philosophers, economists and social scientists – or for anyone who wants to understand what causality is and what it is good for.

University of Oxford’s Museum of the History of Science:

Lord Florey’s team investigated antibiotics in 1939. They succeeded in concentrating and purifying penicillin. The strength of penicillin preparations was determined by measuring the extent to which it prevented bacterial growth. The penicillin was placed in small cylinders and a culture dish and the size of the clear circular inhibited zone gave an indication of strength. Simple apparatus turned this measurement into a routine procedure. The Oxford group defined a standard unit of potency and was able to produce and distribute samples elsewhere.

A specially designed ceramic vessel was introduced to regularize penicillin production. The vessels could be stacked for larger-scale production and readily transported. The vessels were tipped up and the culture containing the penicillin collected with a pistol. The extraction of the penicillin from the culture was partly automated with a counter-current apparatus. Some of the work had to be done by hand using glass bottles and separation funnels.

Penicillin was obtained in a pure and crystalline form and used internationally.
Hunting Causes and Using Them

Approaches in Philosophy and Economics

Nancy Cartwright
For Lucy
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Acknowledgements

Very many people have helped over the years with the work in this volume and I am extremely grateful to them. Specific references will be found in each of the separate chapters. More generally the recent work and the overarching outline for the volume owe much to Julian Reiss and Damien Fennell. Gabriele Contessa, Damien Fennell, Dorota Rejman and Sheldon Steed, all from the London School of Economics (LSE), plus many people at Cambridge University Press worked hard in the production of the volume and Sheldon Steed on the index. Discussions in seminars at LSE and the University of California at San Diego have pushed the work forward considerably and I would like to thank students and colleagues in both places for their help and especially the work of Julian Reiss, who has contributed much to my thinking on causality. Pat Suppes, Ruth Marcus and Adolf Grunbaum have always stood over my shoulder, unachievable models to be emulated, as has Stuart Hampshire of course, who always thought my interest in social science was a mistake. Special thanks are due to Rachel Hacking Gee for the cover drawing.

Funding for the work has been provided from a number of sources which I wish to thank for their generosity and support. The (UK) Arts and Humanities Research Board supported the project Causality: Metaphysics and Methods. The British Academy supported trips to Princeton’s Center for Health and Wellbeing to work with economist Angus Deaton on causal inference about the relations between health and status, which I also studied with epidemiologist Michael Marmot. I have had a three-year grant from the Latsis Foundation to help with my research on causality and leave-time supported by the (US) National Science Foundation under grant No. 0322579. (Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the National Science Foundation.) The volume was conceived and initiated while I was at the Center for Health and Wellbeing and the final chapters were written while I was at the Institute for Advanced Study in Bologna, where I worked especially with Maria Carla Galavotti.

Thanks to all for the help!
Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges permission to use previously published and forthcoming papers in this volume. About one-third of the chapters are new. The provenance of the others is as follows:

Chapter 2: Philosophy of Science, 71, 2004 (pp. 805–19).
Chapter 4: Journal of Philosophy, III (2), 2006 (pp. 55–66).
Chapter 8: British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, 53, 2002 (pp. 411–53).
Chapter 9: British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, 57, 2006 (pp. 197–218).
Chapter 10: Philosophy of Science, 70, 2003 (pp. 203–24).