

Cambridge Elements

Elements in the Philosophy of Physics
edited by
James Owen Weatherall
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THE TEMPORAL ASYMMETRY OF CAUSATION

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-82385-2 — The Temporal Asymmetry of Causation
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Frontmatter
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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108823852

DOI: 10.1017/9781108914765

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First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-82385-2 Paperback
ISSN 2632-413X (online)
ISSN 2632-4121 (print)

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The Temporal Asymmetry of Causation

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DOI: 10.1017/9781108914765
First published online: May 2023

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Abstract: Causes always seem to come prior to their effects. What might explain this asymmetry? Causation's temporal asymmetry isn't due simply to a temporal asymmetry in the laws of nature – the laws are, by and large, temporally symmetric. Nor does the asymmetry appear due to an asymmetry in time itself. This Element examines recent empirical attempts to explain the temporal asymmetry of causation: statistical mechanical accounts, agency accounts, and fork asymmetry accounts. None of these accounts is yet complete and a full explanation of the temporal asymmetry of causation is likely to require contributions from all three programmes.

Keywords: causation, time, temporal asymmetry, statistical mechanics, agency

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ISBNs: 9781108823852 (PB), 9781108914765 (OC)
ISSNs: 2632-413X (online), 2632-4121 (print)

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