

The Manipulability Account of Causation applied to Typical Physical Systems.

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Abstract. Defining the notion of ‘cause’ is one of the oldest unresolved problems of philosophy, starting with the ancient Greeks, and subject to intense debate till date. If there is one field in which ‘causes’ should be easily identifiable, it is physics, since physics deals with the simplest systems, in a sense: so simple they can be described by mathematics. In the present talk I will investigate an influential model (especially popular in philosophy of science) defining ‘causes’, namely the ‘manipulability’ account of James Woodward. It will be shown that to be applicable to typical physical systems, the account needs to be modified – and simplified. Finally, I will compare Woodward’s theory to the counterfactual model of causation of David Lewis, less popular in philosophy of science, but influential in metaphysics.