



Negative Causality as a Genuine and Productive Causality

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Abstract

I claim that the principle of causality and its complexities is essential for understanding the phenomena and events around us. It is difficult to conceive knowledge without causal relationships. In this study, I focus on the principle of negative causality, which pertains to counterfactuals, obstacles, and absent factors within the causal mechanism, as they can be pivotal in making a difference and instigating change. I argue in this research that negative causality possesses a logical causal strategy that is as significant as positive causality, where causes are clearly present and lead to specific outcomes directly associated with them and can be clearly inferred through logical processes. In his book “Physical Connection”, Pearl Dowe criticized negative causation on the bases of not accepting any causal connection if not physical, I will argue against his position trying to show that negative causation is a legitimate mechanism for connecting cause and effect. If we review the history of human experience and knowledge through its various stages, the importance of the principle of causality will emerge prominently in both. This principle is fundamentally embedded in our daily practices and thinking, in the phenomena, events, and things we interact with, as humans cannot conduct their practical lives without ideas and assumptions related to causality. The same applies to scientific knowledge; causality is at the core of this knowledge, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of knowledge without causal relationships. Philosophers throughout the ages have attempted to derive insights from everyday experiences and prevailing knowledge in order to grasp the meaning of the concept of causality, its roots, origins, and foundations, thus seeking to philosophically establish this essential concept. In the context of their research on this principle, philosophers have focused their discussions on real causation, which is defined by a material connection and energy transfer between cause and effect—“throwing a stone at a window will cause it to break.” For a causal relationship to be deemed productive and to hold inferential value, it must create a difference in the operative causal mechanisms. However, as a researcher in the principle of causation, I contend that negative causation is also a genuine form of causation and plays a significant role in the mechanisms at work. The argument I present and defend here is that negative causation holds equal importance to positive (“real”) causation, which is primarily characterized by the transfer of energy between cause and effect. In my view, this transfer cannot be the decisive factor in distinguishing



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between positive and negative causation, as a key feature of negative causation is that causes need not be materially connected to their effects. This is evident from instances that contradict material connection; causes no longer need to be linked to their outcomes. For example, we can consider cases where both cause and effect are absent. Even in such situations, they will undoubtedly create a difference and lead to some result. This underscores that causation, at its core, means creating a difference, which can occur in the case of positive causation—like throwing a stone that breaks a window—and in negative causation, such as the absence of sun leading to the absence of light. As we see, cases of prevention and omission result in negative causal outcomes. Thus, negative causation contains a consistent inferential pathway between cause and effect. It is worth noting that every positive causal process carries within it its opposite, namely negative causation, which represents a possibility among genuine causal relationships. To present my supporting arguments for negative causation, I will rely on logic at each stage and in each argument, following a logical line of reasoning that clarifies the mechanism of action in causal cases where causes are absent, leading to the consequent absence of effects, Thus, creating a causal difference. The contribution of this study to the exploration of causation lies in its focus on a type of causation often regarded as spurious or unreal, specifically negative causation, which has been conventionally treated in philosophical discourse. Therefore, I will retrace the philosophical discussions surrounding negative causation and subsequently present arguments affirming that this form of causation is indeed real, productive, and capable of making a difference within the causal mechanisms at play.

Keywords: Positive causation, negative causality, threshold of influence, causality by absence