

Philosophy 12: Introduction to Causal Reasoning

Study questions for Lecture 1: “Event Causation”

1. Which of the following are best classified as events rather than conditions?
 - (a) Hitting a home run
 - (b) Living in the U.S.
 - (c) Spraining your ankle
 - (d) Being Hispanic
 - (e) Liking rap music
2. Which of the following causal factors are best classified as conditions rather than events?
 - (a) Owning a computer
 - (b) Buying a computer
 - (c) Getting a raise in salary
 - (d) Being male
 - (e) None of the above

For questions 3 through 5, consider the following scenario: Suppose you have a car. You can press the accelerator, apply the parking brake, and turn the lights on or off. Consider which events and events cause the car to move, and which keep it still.

3. The event of releasing the parking brake _____ results in the car moving.
 - (a) Always
 - (b) Never
 - (c) Sometimes
4. Do the lights cause the car to move?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) No way to tell
5. Suppose that the following conditions are met: the parking brake is off and the lights are on. What event will cause the car to move forward?
 - (a) Pushing the accelerator down
 - (b) Pulling the accelerator up
 - (c) No event will cause it to move
6. Imagine that after a recent earthquake in Turkey, officials from the government are touring the street. They see some buildings that are almost untouched by the earthquake and some, right beside the untouched buildings, are ones collapsed into rubble. A woman whose building is totally destroyed asks an official, “Why was my home destroyed?” The official responds, “Why, the earthquake, of course,” thus identifying the earthquake as *the* cause of the building’s collapse. Which of the following factors are counterfactual causes of the building’s collapse?
 - (a) The earthquake
 - (b) The strength of the materials out of which the building was made.
 - (c) The construction technique; that is, the way the materials were put together.
 - (d) The nature of the ground under the woman’s building.

7. The Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan spent every day eating carefully, running several miles, working out in the gym, getting to bed early, and forcing his hands through a bucket of corn for 30 minutes. A sportscaster recently identified his unusual exercise with corn as being the reason Ryan was able to pitch 90 mph fast balls into his mid 40s. The sportscaster's comment means that (choose all that apply):
- (a) Going to bed early was not a cause of Ryan's remarkable endurance.
 - (b) Running several miles was not a cause of Ryan's remarkable endurance.
 - (c) Ryan would not have been able to pitch 90 mph into his mid 40s had he not done the corn exercise.
 - (d) None of the above.

For questions 8 and 9, consider the following table:

Causal Factor 1	Causal Factor 2	Causal Factor 3	Effect
Drank Alcohol	Antilock Brakes working	Road Condition	Accident
Yes	Yes	Wet	Yes
Yes	Yes	Dry	Yes
Yes	No	Wet	Yes
Yes	No	Dry	Yes
No	Yes	Wet	No
No	Yes	Dry	No
No	No	Wet	Yes
No	No	Dry	No

(The table above lists all of the possible combinations of values for the causal factors, and indicates whether the accident would happen for any particular set of values.)

8. From the following options, choose a set of conditions that are jointly sufficient to bring about the accident. Note: There may be more than one correct set of unfavorable conditions. You need find only one.
- (a) Trailing driver was drunk.
 - (b) Trailing car had malfunctioning antilock brakes.
 - (c) The road was wet.
9. Which of the following are sets of conditions jointly sufficient to produce an accident?
- (a) Drunk driver, no antilock brakes
 - (b) Wet road
 - (c) No antilock brakes, wet road
 - (d) No antilock brakes
 - (e) Sober driver, no antilock brakes, dry road
10. Which of the following are necessary conditions for becoming President of the United States?
- (a) Being a U.S. citizen
 - (b) Winning a majority of votes in the electoral college
 - (c) Being at least 35 years of age
 - (d) Being male

For questions 11 through 13, consider an ordinary flashlight, consisting of a switch, a battery, and a light.

11. Does the effect of the battery on the bulb depend on the state of the switch?
- (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) Impossible to tell

12. Does the effect of the switch on the light depend on the state of the battery?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Impossible to tell

13. Do the switch and battery interact to cause the light?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No
- (c) Impossible to tell

For questions 14 through 17, consider the situation in an ordinary refrigerator, with a light on the inside. The light is turned off when the light switch is depressed. The light switch can either be depressed by the door, or by a person when the door is open.

14. Does opening the door *cause* the bulb to be lit?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

15. Does the switch cause the bulb to be lit?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

16. Does the door cause the position of the switch?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

17. Do the door and the switch interact to cause the state of the light?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No