



Causation, Physics, and the Constitution of Reality: Russell's Republic Revisited

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In philosophy as in ordinary life, cause and effect are twin pillars on which much of our thought seems based. But almost a century ago, Bertrand Russell declared that modern physics leaves these pillars without foundations. Russell's revolutionary conclusion was that "the law of causality is a relic of a bygone age, surviving, like the monarchy, only because it is erroneously supposed to do no harm".

Russell's famous challenge remains unanswered. Despite dramatic advances in physics, the intervening century has taken us no closer to an explanation of how to find a place for causation in a world of the kind that physics reveals. In particular, we still have no satisfactory account of the directionality of causation -- the difference between cause and effect, and the fact that causes typically precede their effects. In this important collection of new essays, 13 leading scholars revisit Russell's revolution, in search of reconciliation.

The connecting theme in these essays is that to reconcile causation with physics, we need to put ourselves in the picture: we need to think about why creatures in our situation should present their world in causal terms.

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