Prof. Lauren N. Ross

University of California, Irvine, Logic and Philosophy of Science Department

Causal diversity: Capturing distinctions among causation

In this talk I examine causal diversity, which concerns different types of causes, causal relationships, and causal systems in the world. Consider that many relationships can all meet the same definition of causation (e.g., an interventionist definition), while still differing in other important ways. For example, causal relationships can be fast or slow, stable or unstable, reversible or irreversible, and organized in different patterns (linear pathways, feedback loops, or branching chains). How do we capture important "distinctions among causation" that arise in science and everyday life? Why does such a project matter? I address these questions by introducing a taxonomy for capturing causal diversity. This talk introduces a framework for capturing these causal distinctions and it examines what they tell us about causation, causal explanation, and the causal structure of the world.