**Abstract**

The objective of this dissertation is to critically evaluate Huw Price’s (1991, 1993 (with Peter Menzies), 2007, Forthcoming) *agency theory of causation*. Price has argued in various places for this theory, which characterises causal discourse in terms of our interest, as rational agents, in effective strategies. I argue that the agency theory is radically inadequate, as it fails to faithfully describe the part of our causal discourse that concerns token causal claims. I demonstrate that the theory can be modified, with the help of James Woodward’s (2003) *interventionist* machinery. However, I conclude that this modification comes at the cost of the agency theory’s originality; it is left in a dialectically weaker form—one that is only compelling to those already convinced by its metatheoretical stance.

In Chapter One, I begin with a survey of theories of causation against which the agency theory is standardly compared: probabilistic and counterfactual theories. I then introduce manipulationist theories of causation quite broadly, before expounding on the details of the 1993 agency theory and interventionism. However, in light of Price’s recent writings on the agency theory, and his more explicit commitment to giving an *expressivist* theory of the concept of causation (rather than a metaphysical analysis of causation), I reformulate the theory in expressivist terms. It is this latter version of the agency theory with which I engage for the remainder of the project.

In Chapter Two, I present a series of counterexamples to the expressivist agency theory. I demonstrate that the entry rules the theory presents as being implicit to causal discourse misdescribes the behavior of competent concept-users in a number of different cases. In particular, the theory is descriptively inadequate vis-à-vis a variety of token-level causal claims. With each subsequent problem case, I attempt to modify the theory in order to accommodate ordinary usage; however, this is ultimately unsuccessful, since no one solution proves impervious to counterexample.

For this reason, in Chapter Three I argue for a more radical modification of the agency theory that makes use of interventionist machinery. I motivate this proposal by demonstrating interventionism’s success in the face of the problem cases from Chapter Two. I then present the details of the proposed hybrid theory, explaining how causal models and interventions should be employed in the context of the agency theory. I consider several concerns about this hybridisation arising from the compatibility of the two distinct theories—i.e. the agency theory and interventionism. And I close the chapter by demonstrating the effectiveness of the proposed agency theory with respect to the counterexamples from Chapter Two.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I return to consider the impact this modification of the agency theory has on the theory’s expressivist aspirations. The modifications made in Chapter Three render the theory an instance of a *No-Exit Case*: a case wherein the expressivist description of a discourse *D* *uses*, rather than merely mentions, *D*-language. In particular, as a result of the proposed modifications, the agency theory is compelled to use causal discourse. I consider the consequences on the theory of being a No-Exit case. I argue that some explanation of this fact must be provided in order for the theory to be complete, and present two different classes of explanation: representationalist and anti-representationalist. I compare the relative merits of these explanations, and argue that no one bears an advantage over the other, other than to those already committed to a position on representationlism in general. I then compare the different possible versions of the agency theory—representationlist and anti-representationalist—against their primary competitor in the broader causation debate, interventionism. Ultimately, I conclude that, unless one is already committed to, or at least sympathetic to, anti-representationalism, one will not find the agency theory compelling over and above interventionism. Therefore, while the agency theory can be made to successfully account for our causal discourse, it does so at the expense of any novel contribution it might previously have made to the debate.