

Why Surgeries Require Surgeons: A Menziesian Defense of the Agency Theory of Causation

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I argue in favour of an ‘agency-based’ over an ‘interventionist’ interpretation of manipulationist theories of causation. I examine the debate between interventionist James Woodward (2003) and agency theorists Huw Price and Peter Menzies (Price and Menzies 1993; Price forthcoming), focusing on Woodward’s objection that Price and Menzies’ agency theory is implausibly subjective. After distinguishing between the different notions of subjectivity at play in the agency/interventionist debate, I argue that Woodward’s objection of implausibility fails on the grounds that it misidentifies the kind of subjectivity inherent in the agency theory. Furthermore, I argue that the subjectivity of the agency theory actually provides it with two important explanatory advantages over the more objective interventionist theory.