

Wesley C. Salmon Memorial Lecture

Friday, March 23, 2018
817R Cathedral of Learning

3:00 pm: Presentation of Distinguished Alumni Award

Kathleen Blee, Bettye J. and Ralph E. Bailey Dean
Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences

3:30 pm: Wesley C. Salmon Memorial Lecture

“Causal Processes & Causal Interactions: Warranting Causation in
the Single Case”

by

Nancy Cartwright
UCSD & Durham University

Did the provision of free school uniforms produce reductions in teen pregnancy and dropout rates in any of the three Kenyan sites where this program was introduced? This is a question about singular causation – did this putative cause produce the given effect in this specific situation – just like verdicts about guilt or innocence of a defendant in a legal trial. How do we warrant answers? Wesley Salmon taught us to think of singular causation in terms of causal interactions and causal processes. I shall pursue this idea by presenting a schema for modelling the causal possibilities in specific settings – this setting, here, now – that explicitly references key interactions and implicitly represents the processes that connect them. Salmon’s concerns were primarily ontological, to explain what causation in the single case amounts to. Mine are epistemological, to explain how we can warrant singular causal claims, and especially, how we can establish *relevance*. I shall argue that the kinds of facts we typically adduce as evidence in the single case are indeed evidence because they help identify key features in the interaction/process model of causal possibilities. My defense of this is underwritten by what I call *the argument theory of evidence*, which closely parallels the ‘material theory of induction’ developed by John Norton at about the same time for different purposes.



Wesley C. Salmon joined the Department of Philosophy as Professor and Chair in 1981. He held the rank of University Professor from 1983 until his retirement in 1999. He exerted a profound influence over philosophy of science as it was practiced in Pittsburgh and internationally. His investigations into scientific explanation, causality, probability and induction and the philosophy of space and time provide a model of insight and clarity, in both thought and word. He set an example personally through his unfailing integrity and kindness. He died in 2001. His memory survives through the scholars who study his work and the many who remember him personally, with respect and admiration.

The Wesley C. Salmon Memorial Lecture Fund has been established to support an annual lecture by a prominent scholar in philosophy of science in honor of Wesley Salmon.

Co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Department of History & Philosophy of Science, The Department of Philosophy and the Center for Philosophy of Science