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## A Connection to Free Will

There is an interesting connection between causal decision theory and some of the ideas we discussed in Chapter 4, when we talked about free will. Recall your friend Susan. You are having breakfast with her in New York, and she tells you that last night she was thinking of taking a train trip to Alaska. This puts you in a position to know that the following indicative conditional is true:

If Susan decided to make a train trip to Alaska last night, she failed to do so.

The reason is that you can see that Susan is in New York the next morning, and know that a train trip to from New York to Alaska cannot be completed in a single night. In contrast, it is not clear whether you should think that the following subjunctive conditional was true at a time in which Susan was still deciding what to do:

Were Susan to decide to make the trip to Alaska, she would succeed in bringing about the trip.

If all trains out of New York were cancelled last night because of a storm, this conditional is false. But if a suitable train left New York last night, and if there was nothing to stop Susan from taking it had she decided to do so, the conditional is true.

Recall that our discussion of free will in Lecture 4 focused on the Control Hypothesis: the hypothesis that to act freely is to be in a position to do otherwise. According to the Control Hypothesis, the truth of the indicative conditional above is irrelevant to the question of whether Susan acted freely in staying in New York. But the subjunctive conditional is extremely relevant. For the Control Hypothesis sees acting freely as a matter of being in a position to *cause* a different outcome, and it is the subjunctive conditional, rather than its indicative counterpart, that tracks causal dependence.

Something similar is true of causal decision theory. Notice, in particular, that the causal decision theorist agrees that the following two indicative conditionals are both true of a Newcomb scenario.

If you one-box, you'll almost certainly be rich.

If you two-box, you'll almost certainly be poor.

She thinks, however, that their truth is irrelevant to the question of whether one should one-box or two-box. What matters is the fact that the following subjunctive conditionals are both true:

Were you to one-box, you would fail to bring about a situation in which you end up with as much money as is presently available to you.

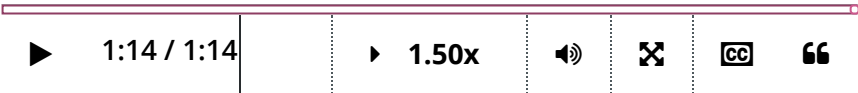
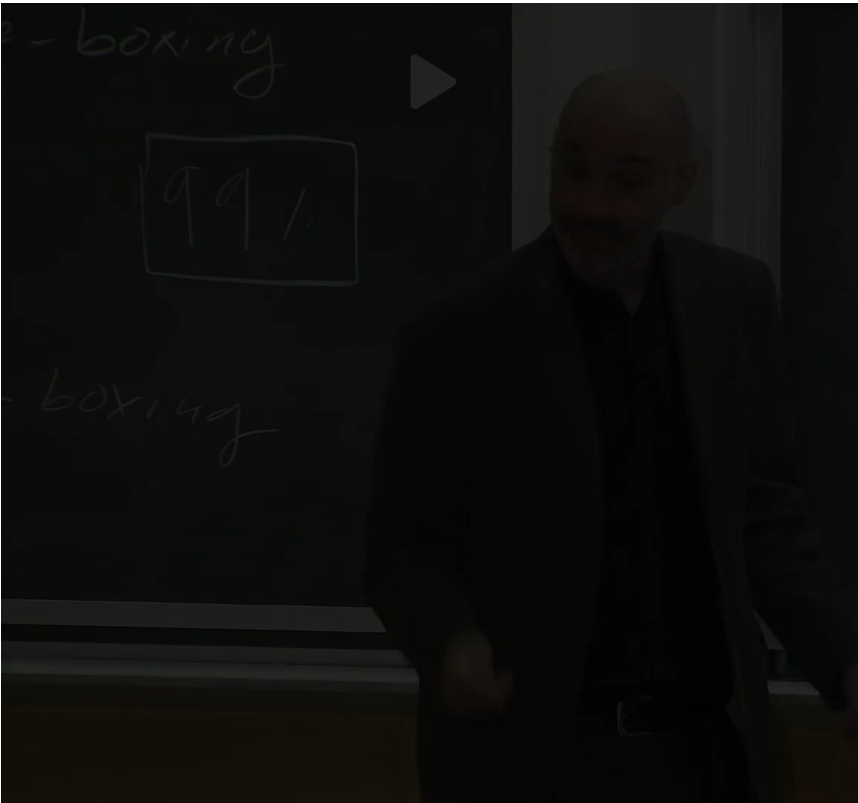
Were you to two-box, you would succeed in bring about a situation in which you end up with as much money as is presently available to you.

This is because causal decision theory thinks that the question of what to do turns on causal, rather than probabilistic, dependence, and it is the subjunctive conditionals above, rather than their indicative counterparts, that track causal dependence.

The moral of our discussion is that the Control Hypothesis and causal decision theory have something important in common: they are both *causalist* accounts of their subject matters. Since indicative conditionals track probabilistic dependence rather than causal dependence, this means that when probabilistic dependence and causal dependence come apart, the Control Hypothesis and Causal Decision Theory will both count indicative conditionals relating actions to outcomes as irrelevant to their subject matters.

## Video Review: A connection with free will

so maybe you think that both for the purposes of assessing issues of free will and for the purposes of decision what matters is the counterfactual conditional. Or you might think that for both purposes what matters is the indicative conditional. And I think the view that you are voicing **is that no, we should go with the counterfactual.**



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<div><div>Aren't both subjunctive conditionals in the text false?</div><div>1</div></div>	

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\*\*Aren't both subjunctive conditionals in the text false?\*\* The first one:<br> \*Were you to one-bo...

On the Control Hypothesis definition

\*"For the Control Hypothesis sees acting freely as a matter of being in a position to cause a differ...

1

? If time travel is impossible, then...

This solves Bruno's problem - he can't shoot his relative, and there is no problem of free will, sinc...

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