

Philosophy 3334 Fall 2023
Reading questions #12
Due Tue, Nov 7

1) Read Harden chapter 5. Harden says that a gene causing a trait is a matter of a gene *making a difference* to that trait which she says implies that there are different alleles in the population which have different effects. Look at endnote 15 in the chapter. What if in fact there was no variation in the population for a phenotype. Lets say that in fact, everyone has exactly one head. Sober and Block would presumably still say that my genes are causing me to have one head. Do you think that is correct? Why? How could you explain what 'cause' means here? What do you think Harden (and/or Dawkins) would say in response?

2) What is the difference between 'thick' and 'thin' notions of causation? Try to fill out the following definitions. According to Harden:

2a) C is a thin cause of E if and only if

2b) C is a thick cause of E if and only if

If a social scientist says that "Smoking causes cancer" what do you think they mean? Is it one of these two definitions? Or something else?

3) After reading the chapter, come up with a question that you want answered or a topic that you would like to be discussed. This could be something that the chapters forced you think about or it could be something that you thought was particularly confusing in the chapters.