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Four general approaches to the metaphysics of causation are current in Australasian philosophy. One is a development of the regularity theory (attributed to Hume) that uses counterfactuals (Lewis, 1973; 1994). A second is based in the relations of universals, which determine laws, which in turn determine causal interactions of particulars (with the possible exception of singular causation, Armstrong, 1983). This broad approach goes back to Plato, and was also held in this century by Russell, who like Plato, but unlike the more recent version of Armstrong (1983), held there were no particulars as such, only universals. A third view, originating with Reichenbach and revived by Salmon (1984), holds that a causal process is one that can be marked. This view relies heavily on ideas about the transfer of information and the relation of information to probability, but it also needs uneliminable counterfactuals. The fourth view was developed recently by Dowe (1992) and Salmon (1994). It holds that a causal process involves the transfer of a non-zero valued conserved quantity. A considerable advantage of this approach over the others is that it requires neither counterfactuals nor abstracta like universals to explain causation.

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