Multi-Causation

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The following is a slightly reformatted extract from a slide presentation used on several occasions in 2008.

(DRAFT: Liable to change)

Multiple varieties of causation often coexist in an event. I'll describe a hypothetical, but realistic, scenario involving multiple causes of a fatal car crash.

> A person (A) drives home one night after drinking with friends in a pub. As he goes round a bend in the road he skids sideways into an oncoming car and the driver in the other car (B) dies. In court, the following facts emerge:
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> **-** A had exceeded the recommended alcohol limit for driving, but had often had the extra glass and then driven home on that route without anything going wrong.
>
> **-** There had earlier been some rain followed by a sharp drop in temperature, as a result of which the road was unusually icy.
>
> **-** A's car was due for its annual MOT test, and he had been given two dates for the test, one before the accident and one after. He chose the later date. Had he taken the earlier date worn tires would have been detected and replaced with tires that could have gripped ice better.
>
> **-** There had been complaints that the camber on the road was not steep enough for a curve so sharp, though in normal weather it was acceptable.
>
> **-** The driver was going slightly faster than normal because he had been called home to help a neighbour who lived alone and had had a bad fall.
>
> **-** A few minutes after the accident the temperature rose in a warm breeze and the ice on the road melted.

What caused the death of the other driver?
Is there an answer to that question?
Is the driver A responsible for the death of B?

Installed here: 26 Nov 2020 [Copied from a much older document.]
28 May 2021: Slightly modified for clarity.

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http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/misc/multi-cause.html
http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/cogaff/misc/multi-cause.pdf

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