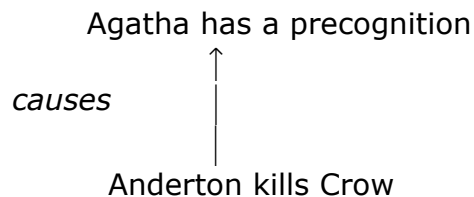
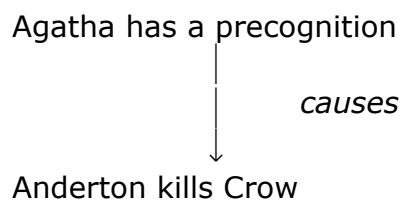


BEN CAPLAN ~ *Minority Report* makes no sense

In [Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*](#) (2002), "pre-cogs" have precognitions about crimes. These precognitions are extremely reliable (and perhaps even infallible), so presumably it is because a crime will be committed at a time t^* that, at an earlier time t , a pre-cog has a precognition that a crime will be committed at t^* . Here's a case in point: John Anderton ([Tom Cruise](#)) kills Leo Crow ([Mike Binder](#)); and Agatha ([Samantha Morton](#)), a pre-cog, has a precognition that Anderton will kill Crow. So presumably it is because Anderton will in fact kill Crow that Agatha has a precognition that Anderton will kill Crow.

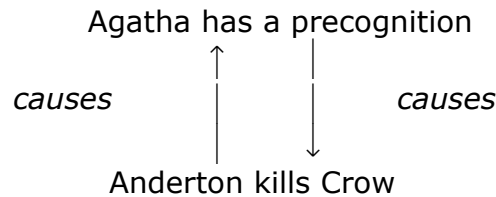


But it is precisely Agatha's precognition that leads Anderton to kill Crow: if it hadn't been for Agatha's precognition, Anderton—who hadn't heard of Crow before—wouldn't have been looking for Crow; nor would Anderton have known where to find Crow. So it is because Agatha has a precognition that Anderton will kill Crow that Anderton does in fact kill Crow.



Putting two and two together, we can conclude that the causal connections go

both ways: it is because Anderton will kill Crow that Agatha has a precognition that Anderton will kill Crow; and it is because Agatha has a precognition that Anderton will kill Crow that Anderton kills Crow.



Maybe there's a problem with such causal loops; maybe not. That's not why the film makes no sense. What makes no sense is that Anderton's boss, Lamar Burgess ([Max Von Sydow](#)), is supposed to have set Anderton up. We know that Burgess is responsible for getting Crow in the hotel room with a picture of Anderton's missing son. But that's not enough for Anderton to have found Crow; Anderton wouldn't have found Crow if it hadn't been for Agatha's precognition. So what did Burgess do to bring about the causal loop? Perhaps Burgess did something to cause Agatha to have the precognition; or perhaps Burgess set up an independent causal chain that would have lead Anderton to Crow's hotel room even in the absence of Agatha's precognition. But, if Burgess did either of these things, the film does not tell us.

One of my students suggested that Agatha faked the precognition so that Anderton would help her escape. There is nothing in the film to support this suggestion; nor does it explain how Burgess set Anderton up. But it is still a clever suggestion.

Anderton ends up bringing Agatha home to his ex-wife, Lara ([Kathryn Morris](#)); and, eventually, Anderton and his ex-wife get back together. Bringing [Samantha Morton](#) home is a way of getting back

together with your ex-wife? Now *that*
doesn't make sense.