

Counterfactual Reasoning and Explanatory Relations

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Abstract

There is an intimate connection between “counterfactual reasoning” and “explanatory relations.” On the one hand, “counterfactual reasoning” plays a crucial role in helping us establish certain explanatory relations, as it is widely acknowledged that explanatory relations have counterfactual implications, by which we may test whether a given explanatory relation holds. On the other hand, explanatory relations also play a crucial role in our counterfactual reasoning. This, however, is comparatively less discussed in the literature, and it is the aim of this paper to explicate it more clearly, with a special focus on the role of explanatory relations in our understanding of counterfactual conditionals. I shall examine the alleged connection through the main semantic frameworks for counterfactual conditionals, including the possible world semantics, causal models, and the premise semantics.

Key Words: counterfactual reasoning, explanatory relations, possible world semantics, causal models, premise semantics