

Conditional Perfection in the semantics of causal claims

Dean McHugh

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Conditional perfection is the inference from *if p, q* to *if not p, not q* (Geis and Zwicky 1971). This talk proposes that an analogous inference is part of the semantics of causal claims; in particular, the meanings of the words *cause* and *because*. We argue that conditional perfection lies at the heart of what it means for a cause to ‘make a difference’ to its effect, a notion we formalise using Carolina Sartorio’s (2005) analysis of the difference-making idea. Given the pragmatic nature of conditional perfection, we speculate that the difference-making component of causal claims may have pragmatic origins.

References

- Geis, Michael L. and Arnold M. Zwicky (1971). On invited inferences. *Linguistic inquiry* 2.4, pp. 561–566. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/4177664.
- Sartorio, Carolina (2005). Causes As Difference-Makers. *Philosophical Studies* 123.1, pp. 71–96. DOI: [10.1007/s11098-004-5217-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-004-5217-y).