

One reason that causation is of interest to philosophers is that so many concepts have a causal dimension. It is well-known that a simple counterfactual theory of causation fails because of problems with cases of preemption and overdetermination. This might lead us to expect that cases of preemption and overdetermination will raise problems for counterfactual theories of other philosophical concepts. And indeed we do find this. Two examples are Frankfurt-style cases in the free will literature, and 'finkish' dispositions. But there is an important, and interesting case where we do not find this: causal decision theory. Versions of causal decision theory, such as those developed by Gibbard and Harper, and Joyce, employ counterfactuals. This might lead us to expect that these theories will yield the wrong recommendations in cases of preemption. But in fact, preemption does not pose any problem for these theories. The explanation, I argue, is that the 'cause' that has usually been the target of counterfactual analyses is a specific relation sometimes called 'actual causation', and this particular relation is not needed for prospective deliberation. A simple counterfactual theory of causation seems to give us just what we need for causal decision theory. This shows that at least some critiques of counterfactual approaches to causation based on preemption are misguided.