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Understanding Epistemic Relevance

Floridi, Luciano (2008) *Understanding Epistemic Relevance.* [Preprint]

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Abstract

Agents require a constant flow, and a high level of processing, of relevant semantic information, in order to interact successfully among themselves and with the environment in which they are embedded. Standard theories of information, however, are silent on the nature of epistemic relevance. In this paper, a subjectivist interpretation of epistemic relevance is developed and defended. It is based on a counterfactual and metatheoretical analysis of the degree of relevance of some semantic information i to an informee/agent a, as a function of the accuracy of i understood as an answer to a query q, given the probability that q might be asked by a. This interpretation of epistemic relevance vindicates a strongly semantic theory of information, according to which semantic information encapsulates truth. It accounts satisfactorily for several important applications and interpretations of the concept of relevant information in a variety of philosophical areas. And it interfaces successfully with current philosophical interpretations of causal and logical relevance.

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