

Roundtable on Coherence

The evidentialist challenge

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The evidentialist objection

If it works, Easwaran and Fitelson's objection establishes that the accuracy-dominance argument does not establish Probabilism in full generality.

- ▶ Consider the following agent:
 - ▶ $c(A_1) = c(A_2) = c(A_3) = 0.1$.
 - ▶ Evidential constraints $\mathcal{E} = \{c : c(A_1) \leq 0.1\}$.
- ▶ She must choose:
 - ▶ Be accuracy-dominated;
 - ▶ Ignore evidence.
- ▶ Joyce's argument only works if such agents must always ignore evidence.
- ▶ This is implausible.

The evidentialist response

Evidence cannot impose the sort of constraint required by the argument:

- ▶ Lewis/Williamson:
 - ▶ All evidence comes in the form of a proposition learned with certainty.
 - ▶ Any other constraints are imposed by synchronic requirements.
 - ▶ **But:** is this realistic?
- ▶ Joyce(?):
 - ▶ If \mathcal{E} is the set of credence functions that satisfy the evidential constraint, $\mathcal{E} \subseteq \mathcal{P}$.
 - ▶ Evidential constraints can never be *local*; they can never apply to individual credences.
 - ▶ They must always be global.
 - ▶ **But:** compare the case of full belief.

The alethic response

Accuracy-dominance considerations constitute one part of a larger justification of Probablism.

Here is a sketch of the larger justification:

- (i) Initial credences ought to satisfy Probabilism.
- (ii) Credences ought to be updated by conditionalization on evidence.
- (iii) An agent justifies her current credences c by giving a **probabilistic argument** in its favour:
 - (a) She proposes plausible initial credences c_0 ;
 - (b) She cites evidence that she has acquired E ;
 - (c) She updates c_0 to incorporate E ;
 - (d) The result is c .
- (iv) By (i), (ii), and (iii), it follows that an agent cannot justify her current credences if they violate Probabilism.

The alethic response

- (i) Initial credences ought to satisfy Probabilism.
 - ▶ This is established by an accuracy-dominance argument.
 - ▶ The evidentialist objection does not defeat this weaker claim.
- (ii) Credences ought to be updated by conditionalization on evidence.
 - ▶ Updating by conditionalization minimizes expected distance from vindication (Greaves and Wallace 2006).

References

- ▶ Easwaran, Kenny and Branden Fitelson (forthcoming) ‘An “evidentialist” worry about Joyce’s argument for Probabilism’ *Dialectica*. (<http://fitelson.org/dialectica.pdf>)
- ▶ Greaves, Hilary and David Wallace (2006) ‘Justifying Conditionalization’ *Mind* 115(459): 607-632.