

Philosophy Preliminary Exam Syllabus

Subjective Probability in Epistemology

This is a study of some of the challenges the probabilistic formalism brings to its application as subjective degrees of belief in epistemology. Inertness of extreme probabilities is an artifact that creates problems in application to learning from experience (confirmation via old evidence), and learning logical facts (logical fallibility). At first sight Jeffrey conditionalization seems to allow holism but is it enough, or too much, for empiricisms like those of Quine or Carnap? “Belief” as the term is used in ordinary life doesn’t correspond to probability 1, so how is it to be understood in comparison with Bayesian degrees of belief? Convenient bridge principles between 1st and 2nd order probability claims are usually assumed, but this does not allow for imperfection in our self-knowledge. How should we generalize to make the system more realistic?

0. Background

“Probability Primer,” in *Philosophy of Probability*, Antony Eagle ed., Routledge, 2011, 1-24.

1. Old Evidence

Theory and Evidence, Clark Glymour, 85-93. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

“Measures of Confirmation,” David Christensen, *Journal of Philosophy* (Sept. 1999): 437-461. <available online:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2564707?origin=JSTOR-pdf> >

2. Logical Infallibility

“Old Evidence and Logical Omniscience in Bayesian Confirmation Theory,” *Testing Scientific Theories*, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume X, John Earman ed., 1983, 99-131.

“Slightly More Realistic Personal Probability,” Ian Hacking, *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Dec., 1967), pp. 311-325 <available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/186120?origin=JSTOR-pdf> >

3. Radical Probabilism and Empiricism

“Two Domains of Empiricism,” Quine
 “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology,” Carnap

“Radical Probabilism: A User’s Manual,” Richard C. Jeffrey, *Philosophical Issues*, Volume 2, Rationality in Epistemology (1992), pp. 193-204. <available online:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1522862> >

“Confirmational Holism and Bayesian Epistemology,” David Christensen, *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Dec., 1992), 540-557. <available online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/188129?origin=JSTOR-pdf> >

4. Preface Paradox, Outright Belief and Degrees of Belief

“Beliefs, Degrees of Belief, and the Lockean Thesis,” Richard Foley, in Franz Huber, Christoph Schmidt-Petri eds., *Degrees of Belief*. Springer, 2009, 37-47.

“Two Models of Belief,” “Deductive Constraints: Problem Cases, Possible Solutions,” chapters 2, 3 of *Putting Logic in its Place*, David Christensen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. <available through *Oxford Scholarship Online*>

“Partial Belief and Flat-out Belief,” Keith Frankish, in Franz Huber, Christoph Schmidt-Petri eds., *Degrees of Belief*. Springer, 2009, 75-93.

5. Infallibility about One’s Beliefs

“Higher Order Degrees of Belief,” Brian Skyrms, in *Prospects for Pragmatism Essays in Memory of F.P. Ramsey*, 109-137. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

"Epistemic Self-Respect", David Christensen, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 107 (2007), 319-337.

“Second-Guessing: A Self-Help Manual,” Roush, *Episteme* (2009), 251-268.