

How reasons are sensitive to available evidence

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Are an agent's epistemic circumstances relevant for this agent's normative reasons?

Pure objectivism: No.

Perspectivism: Yes.

1. Objectivism and perspectivism about reasons

Subjective perspectivism: What A ought to do is to be explained primarily in terms of the (possibly false) contents of A's actual or counterfactual beliefs.

Objective perspectivism: What A ought to do is to be explained primarily in terms of facts, but at least some of these facts have to satisfy epistemic access conditions.

The evidence-relative view (ERV): A has decisive reason to ϕ iff A's *available reasons* count decisively in favour of ϕ -ing.

→ A reason R is *available* to A iff R is part of A's evidence.

→ ERV is to be explained in terms of an evidence constraint on *pro tanto* reasons (or, if there are non-contributing reasons, on contributing *pro tanto* reasons).

2. Evidence constraints on synchronic and diachronic reasons

(S) *Synchronic:* On Friday, Anna has reason to help Bob move on Friday.

(D) *Diachronic:* On Monday, Anna has reason to help Bob move on Friday.

Synchronic evidence constraint (SEC): At t, R is a reason for A to ϕ at t, only if at t, A's evidence includes R.

General evidence constraint for decisive reasons (GEC): At t_1 , $\{R_i, \dots, \text{and } R_n\}$ provide decisive reason for A to ϕ at t_2 , only if the following condition is satisfied: If A conformed to her decisive reasons at every t between t_1 and t_2 , then at t_2 , A's evidence would include $\{R_i, \dots, \text{and } R_n\}$.

→ GEC allows that reasons can be discovered in deliberation and disclosed in advice, as long as these reasons are diachronic

→ Note: The account is sufficiently unified, since SEC is entailed by GEC.

→ GEC is independently motivated by considerations about the general relation between synchronic and diachronic reasons:

Compatibility Constraint (CC): At t_1 , A has decisive reason to ϕ at t_2 , only if A's ϕ -ing at t_2 is compatible with A's following a normatively optimal maximal course of responses available at t_1 .

General account (GA): At t_1 , A has decisive reason to ϕ at t_2 if, and only if, at t_1 , there are some facts $\{R_i, \dots, \text{and } R_n\}$ (as well as background conditions $\{C_i, \dots, \text{and } C_n\}$), such that if A conformed to her decisive reasons at every t from t_1 to t_2 , then at t_2 , $\{R_i, \dots, \text{and } R_n\}$ would provide decisive reason for A to ϕ at t_2 (partly because of $\{C_i, \dots, \text{and } C_n\}$).

- CC strongly supports GA.
- GA, if combined with SEC, entails GEC.
- Hence, an argument for SEC is all that is needed to motivate GEC.

3. In defence of the synchronic evidence constraint

Known ignorance cases: Jill is a physician who has to decide on the correct treatment for her patient, John, who has a minor but not trivial skin complaint. She has three drugs to choose from: drug A, drug B, and drug C. Careful consideration of the literature has led her to the following opinions. Drug A is very likely to relieve the condition but will not completely cure it. One of drugs B and C will completely cure the skin condition; the other though will kill the patient, and there is no way that she can tell which of the two is the perfect cure and which is the killer drug. (Jackson 1991)

The misguidance argument

- (1) The only responsible decision for Jill is to give drug A.
 - (2) If one cannot rationally make the only responsible decision while deliberating in accordance with a certain theory of reasons, then this is not the correct theory of reasons.
 - (3) If Jill deliberates in accordance with pure objectivism, then she believes that she ought not to give A.
 - (4) *Weak enkratic principle:* If you decide to perform an action while at the same time believing that you ought not to perform this action, then you are irrational.
 - (5) As long as Jill deliberates in accordance with pure objectivism, she cannot rationally decide to give drug A (*from 3 and 4*).
 - (6) Therefore, as long as Jill deliberates in accordance with pure objectivism, she cannot rationally make the only responsible decision (*from 1 and 5*).
 - (7) Therefore, pure objectivism is not the correct theory of reasons (*from 2 and 6*).
- The same argument applies to views that accept weaker evidence constraints, but deny SEC.
 - So we should accept SEC.
 - And so, by the argument in §2, we should accept GEC.

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