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Epistemic Optimism

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Knowledge-first Evidentialism

Knowledge-first Evidentialism
Two principles for epistemology:

> (E) You ought to believe just what is supported by your evidence.
>
> (E=K) Your evidence is just what you know.

New Evil Demon problem

> NED claim What you know differs across "good case"-"bad case" pairs, but what is rational does not.

Reject the NED claim: implausible for *rationality*.
Accomodate: what you know differs, but rationalizes the same beliefs. (Lord)

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Knowledge-first Evidentialism and the NED (I)

Accomodate the NED claim What you know differs across Good and Bad but rationalizes the same beliefs.

Problem 1: action cases

In Good, you know $b\&g$. In Bad, you only know b.

	$b\&g$
Go the basement	☺
Go to the garage	☺

	$b\&g$	$b\&\neg g$
Go the basement	☺	☺
Go to the garage	☺	☹

By *Dominance,* in Good, indifference is rational. In Bad, it is not.

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Knowledge-first Evidentialism and the NED (II)

Accomodation   What you know differs across Good and Bad but
               rationalizes the same beliefs.

Problem 2: conditionalization & defeat

- *Conditionalization*. One's degree of beliefs must be the result
  of conditionalizing a prior on one's evidence.
- *Defeat.* If in Bad you learn that the ball is illuminated by red
  lights, you should lower your credence that there is a red ball.

NED claim + Conditionalization requires Pr(*is red*|*seems red*)=1.
But if Pr(*is red*|*seems red*)=1, you can't get Defeat (by standard
means).

Rescuing knowledge-first evidentialism

Most epistemologists endorse alternatives:

- Reject E=K, *e.g.* internalism about evidence.
- Reject E, e.g. dispositionalist view of rationaliy (reliabilism, virtue, dispo. to know, WWKD).

Here we propose a new version of Knowledge-first evidentialism instead.

Epistemic optimism When you can't tell things are epistemically bad, assume they are good.

Roughly: in Bad it's rational to believe as in Good because you cannot know that you are in Bad rather than Good.

Epistemic optimism

Epistemic optimism In Bad it's rational to believe as in Good
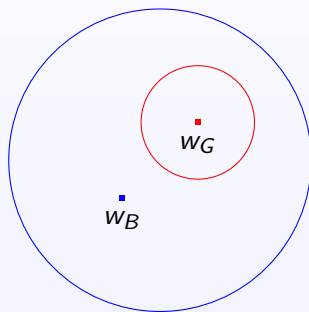because you cannot know that you are in Bad rather than Good.
Variants

1. "The inner side of knowing" (Bird 1 Ichikawa Jenkins 2).
   It's rational to believe p iff some internal duplicate of you
   could know p.

2. *Local* epistemic optimism (Rosencranz 3).
   It's rational to believe p iff you are not in position to know
   that you are not in position to know p.
   $Jp \leftrightarrow \neg K \neg Kp$.

3. Here: *global* epistemic optimism.

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The central conjecture

The central conjecture

Conjecture Bad case ↔ *for all you know, you know **overall more** than what you actually know.*

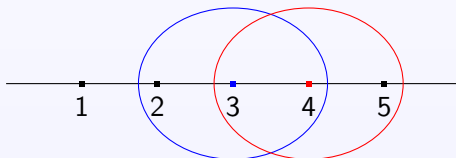The → direction is fairly safe. Nothing that Bad knows but Good doesn't.

The ← direction is the harder one.

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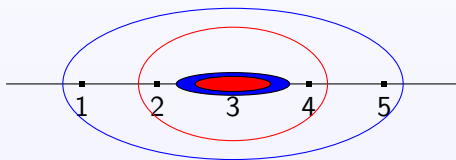○○○

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The central conjecture

Test case: inexact knowledge, sliding

Conjecture Bad case $\leftrightarrow$ *for all you know, you know **overall more** than what you actually know.*

Inexact knowledge case, sliding
Good case where for *some p*: for all you know, you know *p*. Let *p* be $x \geq 3$:

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The central conjecture

Test case: inexact knowledge, focusing

Conjecture Bad case ↔ *for all you know, you know **overall
more** than what you actually know.*

Inexact knowledge case, focusing
Good case where for all you know, you know more *about the
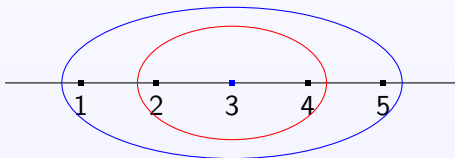position of the hand.*

Solid areas: you know that you do not know that.

Test case: overconfidence

Conjecture Bad case $\leftrightarrow$ *for all you know, you know **overall more** than what you actually know.*

Inexact knowledge, focusing but overconfidence
Problem: if you (mistakenly) believe you know that it's exactly 3, then you don't know that you don't know.

Answer: look at what you are *in position to know*.

Motivating the conjecture

Conjecture ($\rightarrow$) Good case $\rightarrow$ *it's not compatible with what you know that you know **overall more** than what you actually know.*

Why think it holds?

In a Good case, you are "making the most" of your situation. A change of situation that would affect what you are in position to know couldn't strictly improve your total knowledge.

Remark. Good case here means *perfectly good*. Any ordinary person has some rational false beliefs. They are in "bad cases" for these beliefs.

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Epistemic optimism

Epistemic optimism

Define *being epistemically as good as*:

$w \geq w'$ iff at w you know everything that you know at w'.

$w > w'$ iff $w \geq w'$ and $w' \not\geq w$.

w is *strongly optimal* iff there is no $w' > w$.

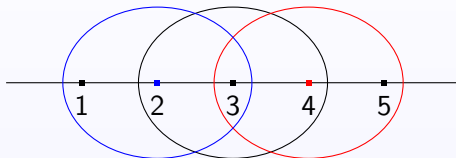w is *weakly optimal* iff there is no strongly optimal $w' > w$.

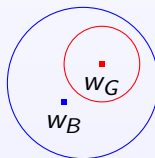Conjecture Good cases $\leftrightarrow$ (weakly) optimal cases.

Proposal:

Global Epistemic Optimism It is rational to believe p at w iff one
knows p at *all* weakly optimal cases w' such that
$w' \geq w$.

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Applications of Epistemic Optimism

Good cases and the New Evil Demon claim

- *Good cases.* If good cases = optimal cases: it is rational to believe exactly what you know.

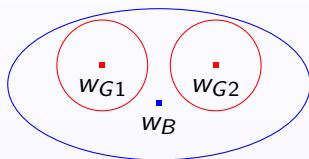- *New Evil Demon claim.* It is rational to believe the same things in Good and Bad.

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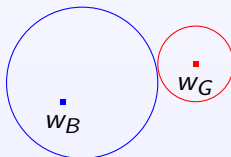
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Applications of Epistemic Optimism

Subtler demon cases, Defeat

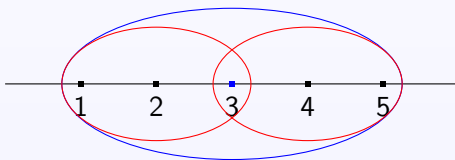- *Subtler New Evil Demon case: de re* beliefs.

- *Defeat*. Strictly more knowledge can remove some rational beliefs.
  When you learn that the ball is illuminated by red lights, it's not rational to believe that it's red.

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Applications of Epistemic Optimism

Weakening the conjecture

- *Weakening the conjecture: 'good' cases without optimality.* Inexact knowledge with strictly better cases, but uniformly distributed.

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Applications of Epistemic Optimism

Preface paradox

- *Preface paradox.*

Let *n* be the number of claims in the book.
Let $k \geq 1$ be the largest number such you know that you do *not* know *k* claims.

- It's rational to believe all the claims you actually know
- It's rational to believe that $n - k$ claims are true.
  i.e., it's rational to believe the disjunction of all conjunctions of $n - k$ claims.

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Logic for knowledge and rational belief

Epistemic Optimist semantics

Kripke model $\langle W, R \rangle$ with R reflexive.

Epistemic betterness. $w \geq w'$ as $R(w) \subseteq R(w')$,

$w > w'$ iff $w \geq w'$ and $w' \not\geq w$.

Let $top(w)$ be the set of weakly optimal worlds at least as good as w:

$top(w) = \{w' : w' \geq w \land \forall w''(w'' > w' \rightarrow \exists w'''(w''' \geq w''))\}$.

Guarantees that for every w, $top(w) \neq \varnothing$.

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Logic for knowledge and rational belief

Formal properties

Epistemic optimism $w \models Jp$ iff for all $w' \in top(w)$, $w' \models Kp$.

- *Supervenience.* If $K(w) = K(w')$ then $J(w') = J(w)$.
- *K–J link.* $Kp \rightarrow Jp$.
- *No Moore paradox.* $K\neg Kp \rightarrow \neg Jp$.
- *J is neither K nor $\neg K \neg K$.* $\not\models Kp \leftrightarrow Jp$, $\not\models \neg K\neg Kp \leftrightarrow Jp$.
- *Consistency, closure.*
- In optimal worlds, $Kp \leftrightarrow Jp$.

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Logic for knowledge and rational belief

Logic (in progress)

Sound and hopefully complete:

> Logic Normality for K, J. Factivity: $Kp \to p$.
> $Kp \to Jp$.
> $J\neg Kp \to \neg Jp$.
> $J(Kp \to Jq) \to (Jp \to Jq)$.

Some notable consequences:

- *Consistency.* $Jp \to \neg J\neg p$.
- *"Infallibility" internalist-looking principles.* $JJp \to Jp$, $J\neg Jp \to \neg Jp$.
- *Smithies' [4] principles.* $\neg J(Jp \wedge \neg p)$, $\neg J(p \wedge \neg Jp)$.
- Further closure principles: $J(Jp \to Jq) \to (Jp \to Jq)$. $J(Kp \to Kq) \to (Jp \to Jq)$.

GEO vs. The Inner Side of Knowing

The inner side of knowing (Bird 1 Ichikawa Jenkins 2).

It's rational to believe p iff some internal duplicate of you could know p.

Two problems:

1. No rational belief in necessary falsehoods.
2. Proliferation of rational belief in Subtler Demon cases.
   If a hallucinate a grain of sand in the glass, then for every grain of sand x, I have an internal duplicate who knows that x is in the glass.

Global Epistemic Optimism avoids both.

1. If p is necessary false, I may still not know that I do not know p.
2. It's rational to believe that *some* grain of sand is in the glass, nothing more.

GEO vs Local Epistemic Optimism (I)

Local epistemic optimism (Rosencranz 3).

> It's rational to believe p iff you are not in position to know that you are not in position to know p.

Principles:

K-J. $Kp \rightarrow Jp$.
D. $Jp \rightarrow \neg J \neg p$.
E1. $Jp \rightarrow \neg K \neg Kp$.
E2. $\neg K \neg Kp \rightarrow Jp$. ******
NMP. $J \neg Kp \rightarrow \neg Jp$.

Given E1-E2, NMP requires:

Lum. $Jp \rightarrow KJp$. ******

** principles rejected by GEO. Agreement on all others.

GEO vs Local Epistemic Optimism (II)

Problems for LEO:

1. Heavy idealisations. A rock is in position to know that it doesn't know that it's sunny.

2. In inexact knowledge cases, $K \neq J$.

3. Luminosity of justification. $Jp \rightarrow KJp$, $\neg Jp \rightarrow K\neg Jp$.

4. Inconsistency. In the Preface, believe all claims in the book. Intuitive, but cannot be used as input to conditionalization.

GEO avoids them.

1. Rock: for every p, some better optimal case that doesn't know p.

2. 2, 3, 4: see above.

Global Epistemic Optimism

Two-tiered theory of evidence

- Knowledge: what ultimately rationalizes belief.
- Rational belief: what you conditionalize upon, what rationalizes decision and action.

Features

- *Knowledge-first.* knowledge determines rationality. No further primitive (dispositions, normality, internal duplication, . . .)
- *Consistency.* provides an input to conditionalization.
- *Defeat.* Alllows 'backtracking' from certainties.
- *Internalist-friendly* jugements on the NED.
- *Attractive K-J principles* that were often associated with internalism.
- *No questionable luminosity claims*.

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References

[1] Bird, A. (2007). Justified judging. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 74(1):81–110.

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[3] Rosencranz, S. (2017). The structure of justification. *Mind*.

[4] Smithies, D. (2012). Moore's paradox and the accessibility of justification. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 85(2):273–300.