Real and Ideal Rationality

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Abstract

Formal epistemologists often claim that our credences should be representable by a probability function. Complete probabilistic coherence, however, is only possible for ideal agents, raising the question of how this requirement relates to our everyday judgments concerning rationality. One possible answer is that being rational is a contextual matter, that the standards for rationality change along with the situation. Just like who counts as tall changes depending on whether we are considering toddlers or basketball players, perhaps what counts as rational shifts according to whether we are considering ideal agents or creatures more like ourselves. Even though a number of formal epistemologists have endorsed this type of solution, I will argue that there is no way to spell out this contextual account that can make sense of our everyday judgments about rationality. Those who defend probabilistic coherence requirements will need an alternative account of the relationship between real and ideal rationality.[1]

Word Count: 11,257 (excluding footnotes and bibliography)

Keywords: Ideal Rationality, Probabilistic Coherence, Logical Omniscience, Gradable Adjectives, Imprecision

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