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Presents:

"Self-undermining Inference Rules"

3:30 p.m.
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1007 Oldfather Hall
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Participants in the colloquium are expected
to have read the paper in advance

Copies of the paper are available in the
Philosophy department office at
1010 Oldfather Hall

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Self-Undermining Inference Rules

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1. Conciliationism--In a peer disagreement, one must revise one's belief/credence in the direction of one's peer's.

--Equal Weight View
--Total Evidence View

2. Steadfast View--In a peer disagreement, one need not revise one's view.

--Dogmatism--unrestricted

--Right Reasons View--One need not revise provided one is at the right belief/credence on the evidence

3. Problem for Conciliationism--Self-undermining inference rules

4. Elga's argument for Inconsistency of Conciliatory Inference Rules (using EW as an example):

Suppose:

I am at .8 for P and Peer is at .4.
I'm at .9 for EW and .1 for TE and Peer is at .1 for EW and .9 for TE

What should happen according to EW when Peer and I meet?

(1) EW says I should revise to .6 for P.

(2) EW says I should revise to .5 for EW and .5 for TE (assuming only these two
    (rules).

    We can make the rational credence for EW move arbitrarily close to 0 (and the
    credence for TE arbitrarily close to 1) by increasing the number of peers who
    have a high credence for TE.

(3) EW tells me to give up EW and adopt TE.

(4) TE tells me to revise to .7 (we'll say) for P (on the assumption that .8 is the
    correct credence for P on e).

(5) EW tells me to revise to .6 for P and to adopt TE which tells me to revise to .7 for
    P

(6) EW gives contradictory advice

5. Elga's Solution--Dogmatism

" It is in the nature of giving consistent advice that one's advice be dogmatic with respect to its own correctness. And views on disagreement give advice on how to respond to evidence. So in order to be consistent, views on disagreement must be dogmatic with respect to their own correctness" ("How to Disagree about how to Disagree")

6. Objection to (3):

 Inference rules tell you what to believe given your evidence, not what inference rules to adopt. Once you lower your credence for EW, EW is silent on what else, if anything, is required.

7. Rule Combination Principle:

Once I lower my credence for EW and raise my credence for TE, I should revise my credence for P by taking a weighted average of what EW dictates for P and what TE dictates for P.

EW dicates .6
TE dictates .7
So my credence for P should be .65

7. Objection to Rule-Combination Bridge Principle:

If my .6 credence for P is irrational (and so needs to be revised) because derived from EW, then so are my .5 credences for EW and TE. (They also came from EW). So why should we use the latter to revise former?

Equivalently--if my .5 credences need not be revised, then why does my .6 credence for p need to be revised?

8. Insulation: When I am rationally required to lower my credence for rule R, I am not rationally required to lower my first order credences that are based on R.

So according to insulation, it is consistent that I have a high rational (1st-order) credence for P, and a low rational (2nd-order) credence for the rationality of my (1st-order) credence for P.

In stark binary form: It is consistent that I rationally believe P and rationally believe that I am irrational in believing P.

9. Explaining away the counterintuitiveness of Insulation: Practical Incoherence

If your goal is to be rational, then if you have a low rational credence for the correctness of a rule R, it is practically irrational for you to continue to use R (provided you have a higher rational credence for the correctness of some other rule). But that is not to say your credences based on R are (epistemically) irrational. According to Insulation, if R is correct, those credences remain rational, even if you have a low rational credence for the correctness of R. Of course, if R is correct, then although it is practically rational to adopt a different inference rule, doing so will lead you to acquire irrational credences. But that's just an instance of the general truth that when one has misleading evidence, good practical reasoning can get you into trouble.

10. Does Insulation Undermine EW as a response to the Rational Disagreement Problem?

Evidence against rationality vs evidence against accuracy

11. Joyce Gradational Accuracy

-A generalization of binary truth that applies to credences.

12. Conciliationist Insulation

-Only first order evidence, i.e. evidence against accuracy, requires revision.

-Evidence against accuracy at level n does not require revision at level n-1, i.e., higher-order evidence against rationality does not require lower-order revision.

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