Partiality and Preferring What's Best

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1 Setup

Rational constraints on preferences.

Objective, all-things-considered betterness as the 'aim' of preference.

Simplification: limit to maximally specific outcomes; no uncertainty

Preference[1] order: $\succsim$
Betterness order: $\succsim^\circ$

If we like (and are willing to assume that some formal properties are met), we can define from these (or better: from the more cumbersome but more informative interval orderings) quantitative property classes of objective value, V, and subjective utility, U.

Roughly, aim to make $\succsim = \succsim^\circ$, or $U = V$

(Simplified) Preferential Principal Principle (PPP): (only) prefer the outcomes that you take to be objectively, all-things considered, better.[2]

Worlds formulation: outcomes are possible worlds

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[1]This is 'weak' preference: $a \succsim b$ means that you prefer a at least as much as b. Assuming this is a complete ordering on the relevant domain, we can define 'strict' preference in terms of it: $a > b$ iff $a \succsim b$ and $\neg b \succsim a$. Similarly with the betterness relation, which is for 'at least as good as', from which we can derive strict betterness.

[2]Here's the actual principle:

$$EU(A|B) = \sum_{x \in \mathbb{R}} C(EV(A) = x\mathrm{v}|B \wedge E) \cdot x\mathrm{u}$$

where $EU(\cdot|-)$ is (conditional) expected utility, A and B are propositions, E is ones total 'admissible' evidence, C is (rational) credence, EV is objective expected value (i.e. sum of the values of the possible outcomes weighted by the objective chance that they obtain if the relevant proposition does), and v and u are units of objective value and subjective utility that have zero and unit points calibrated with each other.

2 The (Intra-world) Partiality Problem

Impartiality: all that matters in determining what is rational to prefer is how things are thought to be in each outcome world, ignoring the position one occupies in that world.

Strong Impartiality: it is irrational to (strictly) prefer one outcome to another on the supposition that the former is impartially no better than the latter.

Problem: worlds formulation of PPP implies Impartiality and Strong Impartiality

Standard rational partiality case: *Drowning*

Impartialist's (ad hoc) maneuvering, partialist's replies

Intra-world rational partiality cases: *Symmetry*, *Preferring to Be Yourself*

Qualitative Supervenience: if the only difference between two outcomes is that the worlds that obtain in them have differences merely in haecceistic facts, then there is no difference in the impartial value of these outcomes

3   The Centered Worlds Solution

De dicto vs. *de se* readings of "Obama believes that he smokes."

(1) B(Obama, {w : Obama smokes in w})

(2)   a. B(Obama, {$\langle w, c \rangle$: c smokes in w})
        b. B(Obama, {$\langle w, c \rangle$: Obama smokes in w}

Similarly, from
$w \gtrsim w'$ to $\langle w, c \rangle \gtrsim \langle w', c' \rangle$
and
$w \gtrsim^\circ w'$ to $\langle w, c \rangle \gtrsim^\circ \langle w', c' \rangle$

But what is this centered betterness?

world-from-perspective (evaluator relativity) vs. individual-in-a-world

Self-interest formulation of PPP: outcomes are individuals-in-a-world

Retains PPP as is (including objectivity)

Allows for partiality

    Symmetry: $\langle s, \text{Righty} \rangle > \langle s, \text{Lefty} \rangle$ and $\langle s, \text{Righty} \rangle >^\circ \langle s, \text{Lefty} \rangle$

    Preferring to Be Yourself: $\langle @, \text{Mike} \rangle > \langle @, \text{Terry} \rangle$ and $\langle @, \text{Mike} \rangle >^\circ \langle @, \text{Terry} \rangle$

    Drowning: $\langle w, A \rangle > \langle w', A \rangle$ and $\langle w, A \rangle >^\circ \langle w', A \rangle$

Open to impartiality

Agent-relativity? Not of value. Otherwise, not clear.