Rational Partiality and Objective Value

Mike Deigan
michael.deigan@yale.edu

Formal Ethics 2019
Ghent University
Rational Constraints on Preference
## Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire</td>
<td>the good</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire</td>
<td>the good</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire</td>
<td>the good</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preference</td>
<td>objective value</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire</td>
<td>the good</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preference</td>
<td>objective value</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lewis (1980): the Principal Principle
### Rational Constraints on Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Guided by</th>
<th>According to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credence</td>
<td>objective chance</td>
<td>Lewis (1980) et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire</td>
<td>the good</td>
<td>Plato, Aristotle, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preference</td>
<td>objective value</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lewis (1980): the Principal Principle  
Me: the *Preferential* Principal Principle
The Preferential Principal Principle (PPP)

Preference: \( w > w' \)
The Preferential Principal Principle (PPP)

Preference: \( w > w' \)
guided by
Objective value: \( w >^o w' \)
The Preferential Principal Principle (PPP)

Preference: \( w > w' \)

guided by

Objective value: \( w >^o w' \)

‘Objective’: perspective invariant
The Preferential Principal Principle (PPP)

Preference: \( w > w' \)

guided by

Objective value: \( w >^o w' \)

‘Objective’: perspective invariant

Fine print:

\[
EU(A|B) = \sum_{x \in \mathbb{R}} C(EV(A) = xv|B \land E) \cdot xu
\]

where \( EU(\cdot|\cdot) \) is (conditional) expected utility, \( A \) and \( B \) are propositions, \( E \) is one’s 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.
Plan

Introduction
The Preferential Principal Principle

I. The Problem: Rational Partiality
The Gerrymandering Solution
And Why it Fails

II. The Solution: Centered Objective Value
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds
Centered Betterness, Two Ways
Reconciling Rational Partiality and the PPP
PART I
The Problem
The Problem of Partiality

**Impartiality**: all that matters in determining what it is rational to prefer is how one takes things to be in a given world, ignoring which position in that world one would occupy.
The Problem of Partiality

PPP \rightarrow \textbf{Impartiality}: all that matters in determining what it is rational to prefer is how one takes things to be in a given world, ignoring which position in that world one would occupy.
The Problem of Partiality

PPP $\rightarrow$ Impartiality: all that matters in determining what it is rational to prefer is how one takes things to be in a given world, ignoring which position in that world one would occupy.
**The Problem of Partiality**

PPP → Impartiality: all that matters in determining what it is rational to prefer is how one takes things to be in a given world, ignoring which position in that world one would occupy.
The Problem of Partiality

\[ w_1: \text{my child drowns, but I rescue two other children} \]
\[ w_2: \text{I rescue my child, but two other children drown} \]

\[ w_1 \succ w_2 \]
The Problem of Partiality

\( w_1 \): my child drowns, but I rescue two other children

\( w_2 \): I rescue my child, but two other children drown

\( w_1 \succ w_2 \)

\( w_1 \prec w_2 \)
$w_1$: my child drowns, but I rescue two other children

$w_2$: I rescue my child, but two other children drown

$w_1 < w_2$
Gerrymandering

$w_1$: my child drowns, but I rescue two other children

$w_2$: I rescue my child, but two other children drown

$w_1 \prec w_2$

$w_1 < w_2$
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
Preferring to be Oneself: My life in the actual world has gone pretty well so far. But many people have led or are leading truly terrible lives. In particular, there have been plenty of morally vicious tyrants who have deliberately caused much needless suffering to innocent people and have done nothing to redeem themselves. Pick an arbitrary one of these tyrants; let’s call him Terry the Tyrant. I strongly prefer living my life as it actually is (and will be) to living Terry the Tyrant’s life as it actually was, I’d much rather be me than him.
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
Intra-world Partiality (or, Why Gerrymandering Fails)
PART II
The Solution
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

?? < ??
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

?? < ??
@ < w?
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

\[ T < M \]

?? \(<??
\@ < w? \checkmark
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

?? < ??
@ < w?  ×
T < M?
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

?? < ??
@ < w?  X
T < M?  X
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

### Equations

\[ \langle @, T \rangle < \langle @, M \rangle \]

### Expressions

- \( ?? < ?? \)
- \( @ < w? \) \( \times \)
- \( T < M? \) \( \times \)
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

?? < ??
@@ < w?  x
T < M?  x
⟨@, T⟩ < ⟨@, M⟩
⟨w, T⟩ > ⟨@, M⟩
De Se Preferences and Centered Worlds

\[ ?? \prec ?? \]
\[ @ \prec w? \quad \times \]
\[ T \prec M? \quad \times \]
\[ \langle @, T \rangle \prec \langle @, M \rangle \]
\[ \langle w, T \rangle \succ \langle @, M \rangle \]

Lewis (1979),
Quine (1969)
What about the PPP?

Preference: \( \langle w, i \rangle > \langle w', i' \rangle \)
guided by

Objective value:
What about the PPP?

Preference: $\langle w, i \rangle > \langle w', i' \rangle$
guided by

Objective value: $\langle w, i \rangle > ^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle$
Centered Betterness, Two Ways

\[ \langle w, i \rangle \succ \langle w', i' \rangle \]
Centered Betterness, Two Ways

\[ \langle w, i \rangle >^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle \]
Centered Betterness, Two Ways

\[ \langle w, i \rangle >^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle \]

### Perspectival:

\( w \) is better from \( i \)'s perspective than \( w' \) is from \( i'' \)'s (cf. Sen (1982))
Centered Betterness, Two Ways

$$\langle w, i \rangle >^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle$$

**Perspectival:** $w$ is better from $i$’s perspective than $w'$ is from $i''$’s
(cf. Sen (1982))

**Individual:** it is better to be $i$ (in $w$) than it is to be $i'$ (in $w'$)
Reconciling Partiality and the PPP

\[ \langle w, i \rangle >^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle \]

**Individual:** it is *objectively* better to be \(i\) (in \(w\)) than it is to be \(i'\) (in \(w'\))
Reconciling Partiality and the PPP

\[ \langle w, i \rangle \succ^{\circ} \langle w', i' \rangle \]

**Individual**: it is *objectively* better to be *i* (in *w*) than it is to be *i'* (in *w'*).

**PPP**: prefer to be the objectively best individual-in-a-world
Reconciling Partiality and the PPP

\[
\langle w, i \rangle >^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle
\]

**Individual:** it is *objectively* better to be \(i\) (in \(w\)) than it is to be \(i'\) (in \(w'\))

**PPP:** prefer to be the objectively best individual-in-a-world

**PPP → Impartiality**
Reconciling Partiality and the PPP

\[ \langle w, i \rangle \succ ^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle \]

**Individual:** it is *objectively* better to be \( i \) (in \( w \)) than it is to be \( i' \) (in \( w' \))

**PPP:** prefer to be the objectively best individual-in-a-world

PPP \( \nexists \) Impartiality
Reconciling Partiality and the PPP

\[ \langle w, i \rangle >^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle \]

**Individual**: it is *objectively* better to be \( i \) (in \( w \)) than it is to be \( i' \) (in \( w' \))

**PPP**: prefer to be the objectively best individual-in-a-world

PPP \( \not\rightarrow \) Impartiality

**Intra-word partiality**: \( \langle @, M \rangle > \langle @, T \rangle \) and \( \langle @, M \rangle >^\circ \langle @, T \rangle \)
Reconciling Partiality and the PPP

\[ \langle w, i \rangle \succ^\circ \langle w', i' \rangle \]

**Individual:** it is *objectively* better to be \( i \) (in \( w \)) than it is to be \( i' \) (in \( w' \))

**PPP:** prefer to be the objectively best individual-in-a-world

**PPP \nrightarrow Impartiality**

**Intra-word partiality:** \( \langle @, M \rangle \succ \langle @, T \rangle \) and \( \langle @, M \rangle \succ^\circ \langle @, T \rangle \)

**Normal partiality:** \( \langle w_2, M \rangle \succ \langle w_1, M \rangle \) and \( \langle w_2, M \rangle \succ^\circ \langle w_1, M \rangle \)
THANKS!


