

Epistemic Compromise between Difference Splitting and Scoring Rules: A Response to Moss

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Epistemic Disagreement and Epistemic Compromise

Main concern: what is the perfect compromise credence?

Traditional Answer: splitting the difference – if my credence in p is x , and yours is y , the perfect compromise is $(x+y)/2$

Sarah's Aims:

- (1) Show that using SR's makes for a coherent account of epistemic compromise
- (2) Show that we *ought* to adopt the SR account

Here: consider to what extent has fulfilled the aims she has set herself

The SR Account of Epistemic Compromise

Epistemic value of credence x in p : $EV(x) = \alpha f_1(x) + (1-\alpha) f_0(x)$

(where f_1 and f_0 together are the agent's SR)

- ▶ Extend to an *algebra* of propositions by adding the EV's of the atomic propositions
- ▶ *Key distinction*: credence-eliciting vs. non-credence eliciting SR's
 - ▶ Important: the latter are (plausibly) irrational

The Perfect Epistemic Compromise: maximise the average of the expected epistemic values of the agents

Aim (1): The Coherence of the SR Account

Key Problem: Preference aggregation and impossibility results

- ▶ Seidenfeld et al. (1989), List & Pettit (2002): the kind of linear aggregation rule Sarah proposes is not consistent with some reasonable-looking assumptions
- ▶ E.g.: a unanimity principle – if we both value x more than y, then the compromise should reflect this

So: is Sarah's approach *incoherent*?

Possible Replies:

- (1) Reject the assumptions – e.g.: epistemic compromises are not subject to the same kind of rationality constraints that agents are
- (2) Reformulate her argument in conditional form – this is still interesting

Aim (2): The Justification of the SR Account (I)

A case-by-case approach: the two SR's can be the same or different

(a) Same SR

(a₁) SR is credence eliciting:

- ▶ The compromise elicited is the same as that of difference-splitting
- ▶ Difference-splitting does at least as well as the SR-approach

(a₂) SR is non-credence eliciting:

- ▶ Odd – rests an epistemological theory on what is epistemically defective
- ▶ No reason to move away from difference-splitting

Aim (2): The Justification of the SR Account (II)

(b) Different SR's (assume they are credence-eliciting)

- ▶ For the formal apparatus to work, this requires unit comparability of SR's
- ▶ BUT: it is not clear that this can be justified (illustrative analogy – expected utilities)
- ▶ So: no reason to prefer the SR approach to difference splitting

Overall: no compelling reason has been provided to switch to the SR approach towards epistemic compromise

However: there may be a different way of reading Sarah's argument that lets it retain more plausibility

- ▶ Use it to *support* difference splitting!

SR's as Supporting Difference-Splitting

To make this argument: take the same, credence-eliciting SR case to be central

- (i) No worries about irrationality or comparability
- (ii) The fact that the two approaches yield the same compromise is no longer problematic

In this way: Sarah shows why difference-splitting

- (i) is (at least sometimes) theoretically well-supported
- (ii) yields compromises with many desirable features
- (iii) has many other features that were not visible beforehand (e.g. with regard to imprecise credences, etc.)

Limitation: relies on the two agents having the same credence-eliciting SR

BUT: this may be widespread and retains relevance even if not

Conclusion

Three Results:

- (1) Sarah *may* not have fulfilled her aim of making clear that the SR-approach is coherent
- (2) Sarah has not fully fulfilled her aim of making clear that we ought to adopt the SR's over difference-splitting to determine the perfect epistemic compromise
- (3) Sarah's arguments, though, could be used to show that the traditional approach is on the right track, and why that is so

Overall: Although Sarah has fallen short of her aims, she has made a useful contribution to the literature on epistemic compromise.