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Arntzenius on " Why ain' cha rich?"

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Abstract

The best-known argument for Evidential Decision Theory (EDT) is the " Why ain'cha rich?" challenge to rival Causal Decision Theory (CDT). The basis for this challenge is that in Newcomb-like situations, acts that conform to EDT may be known in advance to have the better return than acts that conform to CDT. Frank Arntzenius has recently proposed an ingenious counter argument, based on an example in which, he claims, it is predictable in advance that acts that conform to EDT will do less well than acts that conform to CDT. We raise two objections to Arntzenius's example. We argue, first, that the example is subtly incoherent, in a way that undermines its effectiveness against EDT (here we rely on the lessons of Dummett's famous discussion of the conditions for the coherence of a belief in retrocausality); and, second, that the example relies on calculating the average return over an inappropriate population of acts.

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