

A farewell to IIA

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Abstract

Arrow's Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA) has been under criticism for decades for not taking account of preference intensities. Computer-simulation results by Aki Lehtinen concerning strategic voting under various voting rules show that this intensity argument does not need to rest on mere intuition. Voters may express intensities by voting strategically, and that this has beneficial aggregate-level consequences: utilitarian efficiency is higher if voters engage in strategic behaviour than if they always vote sincerely. Strategic voting is thus unambiguously beneficial under a utilitarian evaluation of outcomes. What has been considered the main argument for IIA turns out to be one against it. This paper assesses the implications of these results for interpretations of Arrow's theorem and the Gibbard-Satterthwaite theorem in a discussion on the methodological and philosophical arguments concerning preference intensities and IIA.

Keywords: strategic voting, IIA, utilitarian winner, observability, strategy-proofness

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