

Epistemic Values and the Value of Learning

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Abstract

In addition to purely practical values, cognitive values also figure into scientific deliberations. One way of introducing cognitive values is to consider the cognitive value that accrues to the act of accepting a hypothesis. Although such values may have a role to play, such a role does not exhaust the significance of cognitive values in scientific decision-making. This paper makes a plea for consideration of epistemic value—that is, value attaching to a state of belief—and defends the notion of cognitive epistemic value against some criticisms that have been raised. A stability requirement for epistemic value functions is argued for on the basis of considerations of diachronic coherence. This stability requirement is sufficient to obtain the Value of Learning Theorem, which says that the expected utility of cost-free learning cannot be negative. This holds also for cognitive epistemic values, provided that the stability requirement is met.

Keywords: Theory Choice; Epistemic Utility; Cognitive Value; Value of Evidence; Proper Scoring Rules.

[General Issues: Decision Theory](#)

Subjects: [General Issues: Confirmation/Induction](#)

[General Issues: Values In Science](#)

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