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Primitivism

Suppose you're not comfortable with a localist account of objective probability, according to which the objective probabilities are not generally welldefined, but you also think that a best-systems theory is too subjective to help further constrain objective probability.

Is there something to be done?

There is always the option of being a **primitivist** about objective probabilities.

A primitivist thinks of the notion of objective probability as a theoretical primitive, alongside the notion of a gluon and that of electrical charge. She concedes that it might be possible to establish interesting links between objective probability and rationality, but thinks that objective probability goes beyond such links.

There is certainly nothing incoherent about primitivism. After all: explanations must end somewhere. Why couldn't they end when we get to the objective probabilities?

It is worth noting, however, that primitivism would deliver a somewhat intractable picture of the world.

To see this, suppose a primitivist tells you that the objective probability of a certain event E is 30%. To what degree should you believe that it will occur?

Unless you have information about the future, one would have thought that the answer is clear: you should believe that E will occur to degree 0.3.

The problem with primitivism is that it doesn't make clear what it is about the notion of objective probability that would warrant such a conclusion, because it doesn't explain why rational belief ought to track objective probability. (Notice, in contrast, that the best systems theorist of Section 6.3.4.1 is in a position to claim that the conclusion is warranted because a subject who adjusts her beliefs to the objective probabilities represents the world with an optimal balance of simplicity and strength, and that so representing the world is a constraint of rationality.)

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