

Abstract:

It's often thought that epistemology is ultimately about forming and maintaining true beliefs (accurate credences) and avoiding false beliefs (inaccurate credences). This paper advances a version of epistemic consequentialism that takes seriously the idea that true beliefs are at the heart of epistemic normativity while avoiding prominent objections to simpler versions of that view.

Inspired by sophisticated ethical consequentialists like Railton, the sophisticated epistemic consequentialist distinguishes between what one objectively ought to believe and what subjective strategies one should use in deliberation. As such, sophisticated epistemic consequentialists give an account of the epistemic 'ought,' an 'ought' that's analogous to the moral 'ought' of ethical consequentialist theories. The sophisticated epistemic consequentialist can also the structure of epistemic notions like justification and rationality while avoiding objections to simple consequentialist views in the literature, like the objections from Berker and Greaves.

A large part of what this paper does is advancing the analogy between epistemology and ethics. At the end though, I argue that there's an important and unique case for sophisticated epistemic consequentialism: As it turns out, being a sophisticated epistemic consequentialist is something that's already part of the common conception of what constitutes good reasoning.