Objectivity in Confirmation
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The study of confirmation is the study of the conditions under which a piece of evidence supports, or ought to support, a hypothesis as well as of the level of that support. There are two major kinds of confirmation theories, objective and subjective. Objective theories hold that confirmation questions are settled via purely objective considerations. Subjective ones hold that at least some non-objective considerations come into play. With some exceptions (see, for example, Williamson 2010), most confirmation theorists nowadays opt for subjective theories. The pessimism over objective theories is most probably due to the fact that it has proved very hard, some may even say impossible, to find reasonable principles that decide every question about confirmation in purely objective terms. The aim of this talk is to reverse some of that pessimism by putting in place some cornerstones in the foundations for an objective theory of confirmation. This is achieved by considering lessons not from the failures of subjective theories, which, no doubt, there are many, but rather from the failures of predictivism, a mini theory of confirmation that is typically conceived of as objective.

We begin the discussion with a widely accepted challenge, to find out what is needed in addition to the right kind of inferential relations in order for a hypothesis to earn some, or more than it would otherwise have, support. The predictivist view is then presented as a way to meet this challenge. In its generic form the view holds that novel predictions ought to provide more, or indeed the only, confirmational support to the hypotheses that issue them. Two families of predictivist views are examined, namely temporal and use-novelty, and dismissed on account of their inability to cope with a number of objections. Particular attention is paid to Worrall's (2006) view of use-novelty, as it appears to be the most sophisticated of the lot. Despite its faults, Worrall's view turns our heads in the right direction by attempting to remove contingent considerations from confirmational matters. This turn culminates in the abandonment of the aforementioned challenge. The talk ends with a proposal of some desiderata that an objective theory of confirmation would need to satisfy if it is going to succeed, desiderata which are motivated by lessons learned from the failures of predictivism. I here cite four:

(1) *All* validly formulated questions about confirmation must be supplied unambiguous answers.

(2) Confirmational judgments must remain invariant under anything other than the evidence and the hypothesis (plus any auxiliaries) in question.

(3) All positive and negative instances of a universal hypothesis possess some confirmational weight.

(4) Confirmation from a true evidential proposition E propagates only to those propositional parts of a hypothesis whose truth-value changes if $E's$ truth-value were different.

References:
Williamson, J. (2010) *In defence of objective Bayesianism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Worrall, J. (2006) 'Theory-confirmation and history', In C. Cheyne, & J. Worrall (Eds.), *Rationality and Reality*: *Conversations with Alan Musgrave* (pp. 31–62), Dordrecht: Kluwer.