
Origins of Epistemics

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Abstract

In 1935, Oskar Morgenstern wrote:

[T]here is exhibited an endless chain of reciprocally conjectural reactions and counter-reactions. The remedy would lie in analogous employment of the so-called Russell theory of types in logistics. This would mean that on the basis of the assumed knowledge by the economic subjects of theoretical tenets of Type I, there can be formulated higher propositions of the theory; thus, at least, of Type II. On the basis of information about tenets of Type II, propositions of Type III, at least, may be set up, etc.

We will attempt to trace, from this promising start, the steps forward and backward on the path to the development of epistemic game theory. This will take us through von Neumann and Morgenstern, Nash, and Harsanyi, to an emerging field of epistemics as of the mid-1980s. We will continue with some comments on the variety of epistemic frameworks in use today.