

Imprecision in Normative Domains

by

Miriam Schoenfield

Submitted to the Department of Philosophy May 10, 2012 in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

ABSTRACT

Being rational and being moral can be difficult. However, some theories of rationality and morality make living up to these ideals *too* difficult by imposing requirements which are excessively rigid. In this dissertation, I defend and explore the implications of relaxing some of these requirements. I first consider the implications of thinking that rational agents' doxastic attitudes can be represented by imprecise, rather than precise probabilities. In defending this position, I develop a distinction between an idealized, and less idealized notion of rationality. I then explore the moral implications of the thought that facts about value cannot be represented by a precise value function. Finally, I defend *permissivism*, the view that sometimes there is more than one doxastic attitude that it is rationally permissible to adopt given a particular body of evidence, and show that this view has some interesting implications for questions about higher order evidence.

Thesis Supervisor: Roger White

Title: Professor of Philosophy