

The Objectivity of Ethical Beliefs: Psychological Findings and Implications

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Abstract:

How do people think about the objectivity of their ethical beliefs? Do they regard such beliefs as factual and objective, or as more subjective and preferential? I set out a methodology for assessing the perceived objectivity of ethical beliefs, and use it to document several novel findings. A series of experiments shed light on two central issues: why some people are more objective about their ethical beliefs than other people; and why the same person may treat one sort of ethical belief as more objective than another sort. The results shed light on the nature of ethical belief, and have implications for the resolution of ethical disputes.