Objectivity (philosophy)

Objectivity is a philosophical concept of being true independently from individual subjectivity caused by perception, emotions, or imagination. A proposition is considered to have **objective truth** when its truth conditions are met without bias caused by a sentient subject. Scientific objectivity refers to the ability to judge without partiality or external influence, sometimes used synonymously with *neutrality*.

Contents

Objectivity of knowledge

Plato considered geometry a condition of idealism concerned with universal truth. His contrasting between objectivity and opinion became the basis for philosophies intent on resolving the questions of reality, truth, and existence. He saw opinions as belonging to the shifting sphere of sensibilities, as opposed to a fixed, eternal and knowable incorporeality. Where Plato distinguished between how we know things and their ontological status, subjectivism such as George Berkeley's depends on perception.[2] In Platonic terms, a criticism of subjectivism is that it is difficult to distinguish between knowledge, opinions, and subjective knowledge.[3]

Objectivity and other quality dimensions of web 2.0 portals, encyclopedias and Wikipedia[1]

Platonic idealism is a form of metaphysical objectivism, holding that the ideas exist independently from the individual. Berkeley's empirical idealism, on the other hand, holds that things only exist as they are perceived. Both approaches boast an attempt at objectivity. Plato's definition of objectivity can be found in his epistemology, which is based on mathematics, and his metaphysics, where knowledge of the ontological status of objects and ideas is resistant to change.[2]

In opposition to philosopher René Descartes' method of personal deduction, natural philosopher Isaac Newton applied the relatively objective scientific method to look for evidence before forming a hypothesis.[4] Partially in response to Kant's rationalism, logician Gottlob Frege applied objectivity to his epistemological and metaphysical philosophies. If reality exists independently of consciousness, then it would logically include a

plurality of indescribable forms. Objectivity requires a definition of truth formed by propositions with truth value. An attempt of forming an objective construct incorporates ontological commitments to the reality of objects.[5]

The importance of perception in evaluating and understanding objective reality is debated in the observer effect of quantum mechanics. Direct or naïve realists rely on perception as key in observing objective reality, while instrumentalists hold that observations are useful in predicting objective reality. The concepts that encompass these ideas are important in the philosophy of science. Philosophies of mind explore whether objectivity relies on perceptual constancy.[6]

Objectivity is one of the important quality dimensions in different sources of knowledge: web 2.0 portals, encyclopedias, Wikipedia and others.[1] Objectivity in collaborative platforms (e.g. wiki) requires that content be the same regardless of who reports it, and that different reports contain no notable omissions or elaborations.[7] Therefore one of the important measures related to objectivity can be represented as the number of authors who can present a subject from different perspectives.[8][9]

Objectivity in ethics

Ethical subjectivism

The term "ethical subjectivism" covers two distinct theories in ethics. According to cognitive versions of ethical subjectivism, the truth of moral statements depends upon people's values, attitudes, feelings, or beliefs. Some forms of cognitivist ethical subjectivism can be counted as forms of realism, others are forms of anti-realism.[10] David Hume is a foundational figure for cognitive ethical subjectivism. On a standard interpretation of his theory, a trait of character counts as a moral virtue when it evokes a sentiment of approbation in a sympathetic, informed, and rational human observer.[11] Similarly, Roderick Firth's ideal observer theory held that right acts are those that an impartial, rational observer would approve of.[12] William James, another ethical subjectivist, held that an end is good (to or for a person) just in the case it is desired by that person (see also ethical egoism). According to non-cognitive versions of ethical subjectivism, such as emotivism, prescriptivism, and expressivism, ethical statements cannot be true or false, at all: rather, they are expressions of personal feelings or commands.[13] For example, on A. J. Ayer's emotivism, the statement, "Murder is wrong" is equivalent in meaning to the emotive, "Murder, Boo!"[14]

Ethical objectivism

According to the ethical objectivist, the truth or falsehood of typical moral judgments does not depend upon the beliefs or feelings of any person or group of persons. This view holds that moral propositions are analogous to propositions about chemistry, biology, or history, in so much as they are true despite what anyone believes, hopes, wishes, or feels. When they fail to describe this mind-independent moral reality, they are false—no matter what anyone believes, hopes, wishes, or feels.

There are many versions of ethical objectivism, including various religious views of morality, Platonistic intuitionism, Kantianism, utilitarianism, and certain forms of ethical egoism and contractualism. Note that Platonists define ethical objectivism in an even more narrow way, so that it requires the existence of intrinsic value. Consequently, they reject the idea that contractualists or egoists could be ethical objectivists. Objectivism, in turn, places primacy on the origin of the frame of reference—and, as such, considers any arbitrary frame of reference ultimately a form of ethical subjectivism by a transitive property, even when the frame incidentally coincides with reality and can be used for measurements.

Moral objectivism and relativism

Moral objectivism is the view that what is right or wrong doesn't depend on what anyone thinks is right or wrong. An example is the categorical imperative of Immanuel Kant which says: "Act only according to that maxim [i.e., rule] whereby you can at the same time will that it become a universal law." John Stuart Mill was a consequential thinker and therefore proposed utilitarianism which asserts that in any situation, the right thing to do is whatever is likely to produce the most happiness overall. When it comes to relativism, Russian philosopher and writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, coined the phrase "If God doesn't exist, everything is permissible". That phrase was his explanation of how decline in religion affects our moral thinking. American anthropologist Ruth Benedict argued that there is no single objective morality and that morality varies with culture.[15]

See also

- Factual relativism
- Journalistic objectivity
- Naïve realism
- Objectivity (science)

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External links

- "Objectivity" (http://www.iep.utm.edu/objectiv). *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Subjectivity and Objectivity (http://host.uniroma3.it/progetti/kant/field/suob.htm)—by Pete Mandik

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