

Objectivity

A Very Short Introduction

By Stephen Gaukroger

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Should we always be impartial, or are there cases where this is inappropriate?
- Does being objective mean removing all elements of personal judgement from our decisions?
- Do some of the ways of thinking about objectivity make it impossible for anyone to be objective?
- Can we be objective just by following a method, such as a scientific method, or is it more complicated than that?
- Why do our true beliefs have to be justified to count as knowledge?
- How is Wikipedia different from traditional reference sources?
- To what extent is being objective a question of morality?
- When the evidence conflicts with a scientific theory, is that the end of the matter, or should we explore whether the problem might be in some hidden auxiliary hypothesis that accompanies the theory?
- Does Einstein's theory of relativity show that everything is relative?
- How is objectivity possible if we always bring assumptions, values, or theories to our judgements?
- Where we cannot assess theories directly by comparing them with the evidence, are there internal grounds on which we can assess them, such as their ability to generate fruitful research programmes?
- What kinds of difficulties have scientists faced in providing objective pictorial representations of physical processes?
- Is it objective to try to understand human behaviour without considering the accounts that people give of their own behaviour, no matter how mistaken these accounts might seem to us?
- Why should we want objectivity in ethics?
- Can we distinguish matters of taste in which questions of objectivity might be appropriate from those in which they clearly not appropriate?

Other Books by the Author

The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity 1210-1685. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1680-1760. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Further Reading

T. Burge, *Origins of Objectivity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

L. Daston and P. Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007)

A. Megill (ed.), *Rethinking Objectivity* (Durham, NC; Duke University Press, 1994)

A.W. Moore, *Points of View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)