אנו שמחים לארח את

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Inferring Normative Values from Descriptive Premises

Given that there *are* hungry children in the country, it seems easy and natural to infer that we *ought* to donate to poverty-relief organizations. This ability to infer 'ought' from 'is', normative values from descriptive premises, is at the heart of the unique human capacity to generate novel norms. However, such normative inference is a double-edged sword, often leading to less than innocuous conclusions such as 'might is right': criticisms go back as far as Hume's 'is-ought fallacy'. I will present two converging lines of research exploring inference from descriptions to norms. The first is a critique of normativist approaches to reasoning and decision making; that is, approaches that evaluate human rationality by conformity to normative rules. I argue that such approaches inevitably lead to unjustifiable is-ought inference, and that psychology of human thinking would do better as a science without normative evaluation. The second line of research applies this descriptivist approach to normative thinking itself, by developing an empirical theory of is-ought inference. Our evidence shows that, given descriptions of actions leading to valued goals, people infer normative conclusions, but such inference can be suppressed given conflicting goals or conflicting normative values. Together, these lines of research demonstrate the prevalence and significance of normative inference, as well as its inherent limitations.

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נשמח לראותכם בין אורחינו

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