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True Traitors and False Friends: A Survey of Negative Dual Character Concepts

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Abstract

Dual character concepts received significant attention from experimental philosophers. They are defined as possessing two independent criteria for categorization, each associated with a distinct sense of the concept. One of these criteria is descriptive, the other is normative. Almost all examples discussed in the literature involve a positively valenced normative element. For instance: the normative criterion associated with the concept of scientist is the pursuit of empirical truth and knowledge. Presumably, pursuing empirical truth and knowledge is a good thing. But can dual character concepts also involve negatively valenced elements? For instance: there is a sense in which someone who betrays another's confidence without nurturing ill-will towards them is not a true traitor. In this paper, we report data suggesting that negatively-valenced concepts such as enemy and traitor behave very similarly, but not identically, to positively-valenced dual character concepts such as friend or a loyal person.