

COLLECTIVE BELIEF: KINDS, CONTEXTS, AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

I focus on collective belief as this has been characterized in my previous work, beginning with my paper “Modeling Collective Belief” (1987), and further refined later. My discussion has two parts. In the first part, I emphasize the aim of my account of collective belief, noting some criteria of adequacy for an account with that aim, and introduce the account in its present form. I explain how it satisfies the criteria of adequacy, and propose that no account that does not appeal to a constitutive joint commitment can satisfy one of the criteria. I then note the important distinction between basic and non-basic cases of collective belief. Finally, I discuss some concerns that have been raised about the account. In the second part, I draw attention to an ubiquitous situation that I take to involve the development of a sequence of collective beliefs according to my account. In concluding, I consider some consequences of such collective beliefs for those who are parties to them.