

## Against Moral Relativism

### ESSENTIALLY

Relativism says we must not have absolute moral rules: eg adultery is always wrong. It claims nothing is wrong as in factually/absolutely immoral and that we should assume morality should be just opinion. But that is an absolute rule after all. It is always wrong to say morality is more than opinion. But which opinion or whose opinion? Why not assumption or proof? Relativism is just totalitarianism or ideology pretending to be tolerance. Relativism is just immorality and lawlessness under a new name. The name seems to make it look more legitimate and is just a screen. We have no choice but to choose what we see as objective morality even if it is not. Relativism is fundamentally a lie you tell yourself that you have no objective morality and don't recognise it. It can only be a slippery slope for lies drag you down and others with you.

### LET US BEGIN

Why do we approve of moral acts? Is it because they are factually what we ought to do?

Is approving making them moral? Relativism says yes - belief in objective morality says no. Objective morality means that no matter if everybody thinks kicking a baby for fun is right or neither right or wrong it is in FACT wrong.

Moral relativists may say when they call a deliberately bad action evil they personally think it is evil. But that is talking about an opinion not morality. The question about if the action is wrong or evil is not about what their moral preference is. What we want to know is, "Is the deed ITSELF evil."

That gets right to the heart of the matter.

*Ronald A. Lindsay - "Morality is neither objective nor subjective—it's a practical enterprise enmeshed in human relationships. That gives it objectivity enough."*

### DEFINITIONS

**Objective Morality** - an action really is wrong. When something is wrong morally, it is absolutely immoral. In other words it has a moral absolute that it is wrong.

**Moral Relativism** - nothing is really right or wrong morally. It's all opinions. An opinion is something you have weak reasons to accept. It is close to a guess or an assumption. Moral relativists invent moral rules and rights and enforce them. That is why they can be okay with abortion today and against it tomorrow.

Moral Relativism is the denial that there are any moral absolutes. It often takes the form of saying that human rights are made so by being simply commonly agreed by all or the majority. It opposes the notion of human rights being given by God. Many fear that if rights are given by the majority that this relativism tends towards tyranny.

Ethics is about principle and is about wondering what is really good or bad. Morality is about making rules that express these principles. Ethics is not up for debate while moral rules might be. Moral relativism and ethical relativism are often distinguished. I have not bothered with the distinction as it is not relevant. Moral relativism claims that if you murder under xyz circumstances in England that is immoral but in Cuckoo land it is moral to do the exact same thing under the exact same circumstances. It depends on the culture and relativists go with culture one minute and something else the next so all you have is chaos and the relativist has no problem with changing and swopping. Ethical relativism is simply the doctrine that everybody has the same fixed moral principles but has different rules to express them. For example, in Europe you give a woman the right to no-fault divorce to make her equal with men while in another culture you will let her marry a polygamously married man for it means survival for her. She gets her equality a different way under very difficult circumstances.

### THE COMPONENTS OF MORAL RELATIVISM

To be a relativist you have to subscribe to at least one of the following.

1 The view that what is true is true no matter what anybody thinks is wrong. There is no objective standard of truth. So truth is my truth not the truth.

2 The view that truth is about facts but there are no moral facts. This view says there is an objective standard of truth except in morality.

3 Even if there is a standard we cannot know it. So it is right to invent morality.

4 Even if there is a standard we do not know it. So it is right to invent morality.

5 It does not matter and we should not care. This is relativism in practice.

1 is the strongest form of moral relativism - it says it is moral to say that the moon is a murderer for there is no truth.

2 is the next strongest one.

The last three are about relativism in practice. They do not deny there is an objective standard outright.

Two people can have fundamental moral disagreements but that does not in itself make one of them or both of them relativist. For example, one person may think it is okay to execute child molesters while the other will want them rehabilitated. It can be hard to tell if somebody is a relativist. Relativists can sound like people who think their morality is absolutely true.

## RELATIVISM AND TOTALITARIANISM

Whose will should determine the law? The moral relativists or those who believe in absolute moral values?

Catholics say that as society cannot function if anything goes in morality, the relativists need to use force and form dictatorships to force their rules on those who disagree with them. If they do not want to force any morality, they have to force the critics of relativism to be silent and persecute them with the law. Only the dictators in relativism can and do decide what rules are to be enforced. Totalitarianism is called for.

Moral relativists may force what they see as opinions on people. It makes sense that the absolutist morality believers should use more force. They would be hard to reason with for they say their morality is right and that is that. Moral relativists can and indeed would be expected to be an improvement over the absolutists.

## RELATIVISM AND INTENTION

Does relativism say something automatically becomes right when intended to be or mostly intended to be? Intention does not have the magical power to turn a kick delivered to a dog into a good thing. Not all relativists regard intention as important. If a good intention matters then it follows that to intend to feed a baby is objectively good. It is possible that morality is not doable and if so then all you can do is act with sincere and good intention. But that is not relativism. It is only an admission of ignorance.

## DO PEOPLE REALLY BELIEVE IN OBJECTIVE MORALITY?

Relativists believe that believers in absolute moral values are really relativists and not believers. They think they are closet relativists and that they refuse to respect those who are also relativists just because they have different rules of right and wrong. The believers in absolute values should be far more intolerant than the liberal relativists. It is true relativists can be intolerant even though their relativistic attitude is intended to prevent people having firm standards of right and wrong and to accept moral differences. The virgin and the whore are nearly equally esteemed. It will never be 100% desirable to have relativists making the laws but its worse to have moral absolutists doing it. At least relativists believe in listening and changing their minds.

Moral relativists teach that your truth about what is right and wrong differs from the next persons truth about right and wrong. They would say that it is wrong if you commit adultery and you think it is wrong. They would say it is right if your friend commits adultery believing it is right. Relativists deny that there are real standards. They do not really believe in moral facts.

The error in this is that if one nation has many disagreements with another about what is ethical or moral, the problem may be that one of these nations is being stubborn, confused, superstitious or ignorant. There is no need to conclude that they have a different moral code and that one is as true/good as the other is. The variations do not mean that one moral code is as good as another. The variations would not prove that there is are no moral facts.

Modified forms of moral relativism say that in practice we have to be relativists for we cannot know what is objectively

right or wrong.

Religious relativists tend to hold that religious truths are relative. They say that what is true for one religion is not true for another. For example, it is true for the Muslim that Jesus was not God. It is true for the Christian that he was. It is true for the Catholic that the communion wafer is Jesus Christ in the form of bread. For Protestants, it is merely bread. These examples would be called upon by religious relativists to argue that it all depends on what your particular definition of "true" is. But what do they mean by saying what is true for say a Muslim is true for him? The Muslim claims to have faith not knowledge. He says he believes his religion is true. But that does not mean it is true for him in the sense that it is 100% true. Religious relativists are intolerant of religion in the sense that they think they can decide what people regard as true and certain. The expression "true for you" seems to actually say that you merely think something is true. It is open then to the possibility that you think wrongly.

Relativism is cherished and popularised today because those who adopt it feel they are nice and tolerant. But relativism makes it hard for people who believe that religious truth or morality is real and not just a matter of opinion. It undermines their happiness and their credibility. It leads to intolerance towards those who oppose it. Take an example. The relativist will hold that abortion being right or wrong has nothing to do with any good or harm it does. All that matters is the opinion that it should be allowed. The pro-life activist will say its an intolerable evil for it is harmful and will fight any attempt to legalise it. The relativist will want it tolerated and even legalised. One has to be intolerant of the other.

The relativist turns morality into opinion. This automatically implies that the person who opposes relativism is a bigot and a liar if he holds that morality is a real thing and not mere guesswork and opinion. It forces even religious leaders to start regarding their faith as a system of opinion rather than truth. This wrecks genuine religious freedom.

Opinions are conclusions thought out at least a tiny bit but open to dispute. They need not be necessarily thought out carefully or well. The fact that an opinion is open to dispute means you ask for it to be examined by others to see if it is as reasonable or correct as you think. That is the case whether you like it to be examined or not.

The person who forces their opinions on other people is a worse bigot than the person who tries to force the truth on others. If you are going to have something forced on you it is some consolation if that something is the truth or the evidence says it probably is the truth.

Another problem is that if morality is opinion people will not agree on their rights. You have people who think they have the right to be taken to a clinic and painlessly killed just because their life is their business and so they should end it for any reason they want. Those who have the most money and the most power and who shout the loudest are the ones that will get the rights they have possibly invented enshrined in the law of the land and protected by the law. Relativism is not the philosophy of tolerance it pretends to be - it is just a rationale for might is right.

Moral Relativists keep rules and punish lawbreakers. They disagree on what rule-makers should be obeyed. Is it the individual conscience? Is it the state? The majority of people where you live? Is it the Church? All they can do is arbitrarily pick one of these. They are advocating moral insanity. They are evilly guessing and telling us to obey that guess. When it is moral relativists who are telling us to obey the state - or whatever - they are really commanding us to obey them! Now we are starting to see why some teach it! It gratifies their base hunger for control.

What can be more wrong than for ethical relativists to be instructing people to obey an authority that tells them to believe in real right and wrong?

Moral relativism is so full of contradictions that it is best understood as being just the doctrine that there is no truth. If nonsense is true then there is no truth. Some people say that truth is just what you believe so that if I believe in God then it is true that there is a God and that if my friend is an Atheist then it is true that there is no God. Truth is relative. The smart looking statement that truth is relative is just an underhand way of saying there is no such thing as truth! There is a place for anybody that imagines there is no truth! I know that I exist so if I believe that I do not exist that is proof that truth is objective and real and not relative and not an illusion. If there is no truth then how come relativists and subjectivists hold that it is true that relativism or subjectivism is right?

If what is right depends on what others think then eventually people will stop believing and will only pretend that they still believe to keep others from talking about them.

Don't be caught by the notion that if a person believes something to be right then it is right for believing something does not mean that it is true. That is just scepticism in disguise.

The relativist who says that he or she is not teaching relativism but merely saying how he or she sees things is a more rational kind of relativist. He or she is not saying there is no absolute truth in right and wrong. He or she is only saying that

she has her view and you have yours and that is as far as it can go for us. They are sceptical about knowing for real what is right and what is wrong.

Relativism appeals to people who suspect that those who say they know the truth about morality or religion or whatever are imperialistic and disrespect others. It is self-defeating. If the truth is known, then relativists are not respecting those groups or individuals who know it. Relativism is often bigoted and imperialistic itself!

Some think morals are relative for we are at least partly programmed by our upbringing etc to consider some actions moral. But if I am programmed to kill a baby for fun, that does not change the fact that killing babies for fun is bad. The programming in fact is irrelevant.

There is no right and wrong - strictly speaking. There is just exact and inexact and deemed exact and deemed inexact. This makes morality very complex to work out. And relativism deepens the problem.

## GOD

The religionist has to worry more about how relativism makes God and his laws relative than the effects of relativism on people. The religionist will ask that if nothing is ultimately true then why respect God? For those who accept Jesus' teaching that God is to get the totality of our love and all must be done for him, what relativism does to the service of God is the only thing that matters. That is what they object to. Relativism gives us enough trouble when it hurts people. But religion wants us to worry about God as well and sometimes only him. Relativism is a blight but belief in God makes it worse and harder to manage. It also gives it a new reason to exist for my God disagrees with everybody else's God. Worse, it blinds the relativist religionist to the fact that he or she is a relativist. They get too attached to their moral ideas and turn into bigots. It is a fact that though most religions condemn relativism they actually practice it.

## MORAL RELATIVISM EXAGGERATES THE SCOPE OF MORAL DISAGREEMENT

Moral relativists often think that there is less agreement on morality in the world than what there is. Both pro-abortion people and pro-life people agree that killing the innocent for fun is wrong. None of them say you should have an abortion for the hell of it. They disagree on science not morality - they disagree on whether the unborn child is really a child or not or on whether an undeveloped baby can have the same right as an adult. Eskimos may put their babies out in the cold to kill them, but they see that they have no choice. Getting rid of the babies is needed for the family to survive in difficult circumstances. We cannot say that Eskimos disagree with us on killing babies. They do not. We would have to do the same. Moral relativists forget that there is agreement on all the important principles - it is in the detail where the trouble arises.

Moral relativists mistake many cultures that do things differently from us as being relativist. They also think that the differences in morality are so great all over the world that this proves that morality is relative. But they do not realise that the differences are not major as regards principles. There are differences in how the principles are applied.

And if one country has its version of morality - say that it is okay for parents to abuse their children for fun - and another country sternly forbids such abuse that has nothing at all to do with proving that morality is relative. One or both may have the wrong idea of morality. An opinion about morality can be wrong.

Moral relativists will say that a culture that burns widows to death so that they may be with their dead husbands are doing what is right in their culture. They will not use that excuse if say a large American state enforces absolutist morality in the name of culture!

## RELIGION'S HIDDEN RELATIVISM

The differences between the systems of morality in the world are presented as evidence that the world is relativist. They are also presented as evidence that relativism is true. But the world being relativist does not make relativism true. The differences are also believed by many to be overstated. This is true in a rough sense. The differences however are strong on the religious and spiritual plane. They are lot stronger and more pronounced than the differences between different nations on the community plane.

Religion has given a lot of impetus to the rise of moral relativism through its distorting of morality. It has taken credibility away from what it terms morality. It has taken credibility from what society calls morality. The knock-on effect has been catastrophic.

For example, religion says the worst thing when you sin is not the harm you do but the disrespect it offers to God. That is a really twisted and evil idea.

Christianity is notorious for talking about sin which is presented as something abominable. This is relativism for they are saying, "We are doing the right thing making sin worse than it is just because it is our tradition." That is no different from a relativist saying, "FGM is right in the cultures that require it."

"Judge the sinner but regard the sinner as a saint and love her" translates as, "morality is rubbish."

The saints in Heaven do not mind if their fathers and mothers and children are damned in Hell forever. The Church says that this is only right for its a waste of compassion to care. It takes a good person to be compassionate towards somebody that can be helped. But it takes a better one to be compassionate towards somebody that cannot be helped or who does not want to be helped. Why? It shows that your compassion is about people and not results.

Religion makes some good critiques of relativism but nevertheless it is the best friend relativism ever had.

The God concept encourages moral relativism. If God incarnated himself as a poisonous snake and bit a child died after days of agony, we would hate God. But if God makes the snake and does not become the snake, we don't mind. We will condone his part in it. It is like how we love revenge but want others to exact it for us. Clearly, we all have a strong hypocritical streak in us. Belief in God only worsens that streak.

Religion is rife with selective moral relativists. Here is an example. Gays who claim to be Catholic say that homosexuality is not just not immoral but morally good and holy. Yet the same might accept the Church ban on abortion. They cannot say they accept it because the Church says so. They thus accept it on other grounds so their acceptance is not genuinely Catholic.

Relativism leads to person 1 and 2 and so on to infinity having totally different morals in important subjects. When you hear all the different passionate voices all disagreeing with one another all you will do is confuse yourself. You will not take any of them seriously. Deep belief in what they propose will be impossible for too many people with their truth means there is no truth worth listening to and you do not know what to think. Relativism always burns itself out but sadly comes back in a new form.

Relativism is a theory and based on bad evidence and bad reasoning. A theory is no justification for overturning a morality that has always been the best of a bad lot.

Relativism is just an attempt not to search for real good and real evil but to make things good by declaring them good. It leads to defeat and puts you off wanting to correct anybody who speaks moral nonsense. It bullies those who contradict the current ethical fads. Those who believe in a fixed factual morality will often abuse it and distort things. They are able to do this in spite of the morality. But by contrast, relativism even if it were good and desirable actually creates room for the insincere and manipulative to pose as relativists. It is too easily manipulated and is so easily abused that it is an abuse in itself.