

moral relativism

by Moral Relativism

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Moral Relativism

1. Moral relativism is the opinion that moral judgments are judged as true or fails, depending on a specific perspective. Accordingly, no viewpoint is to be better preferred than another. Individual relativism is that each person determines his own moral values. Cultural relativism opines that moral values are determined by society and are binding to every member of society.
2. Protagoras's individual relativism's main features are that man is the measure of all things, a person's judgment constitutes the benchmark of truth, and the private views of the person are the yardstick of measuring truth for others. Each person's private judgment reflects the standard of truth for the person judging.
3. Sextus claims that there does not exist any autonomous and common standards of morality. Every moral view, he explained, is culture-specific. Because different cultures exist with different moral persuasions, there is a clash of moral standards among different societies. Moral standards, he asserted, should be regarded according to the communities where they exist.
4. Montaigne suggested that people's customs can form the culture of those practicing them. He held that morality was not a fixed feature of nature as people suggest, but people's cultural practices shape it. Because of peer pressure, people inevitably accept the customs of society. He, therefore, found theories founding morality in absolute criteria were imprudent.
5. The argument for cultural relativism from social diversity is that moral standards are different in different societies. These contradictory moral standards are founded on social customs or unprejudiced moral truths. There is no explanation of why the opposing moral

standards are founded on the objective moral truth. It is thus reasonable to conclude that the moral standards are based wholly on social customs.

6. In his criticism of individual relativism, Plato argues that “Man is the Measure of All Things” is self-defeating. The notion that man is the evaluator of acceptable and unacceptable makes Protagoras’s relativism theory untrue. The problem with this criticism is that the theory he created of objective truth was false and not a criticism of the cultural relativism theory.
7. Balfour argued that customs are not similar to true morality. This is because there exist some corrupt cultures which leads to corrupt moral values. He suggested that fluctuating customs based on time and place ignores some ideal moral standards. Therefore, social values cannot be the true moral values. The problem with Balfour’s criticism is his dependence on internal intuitions to determine the practices that depict true morality and those deprived. The problem here is that his moral convictions might have been based on his Scottish moral tradition, which was influenced by Calvinistic religious beliefs.
8. Rachel criticizes the theory on the basis that different societies have different moral values. Accordingly, he explained three common moral values held in all societies and which, when violated, society could disintegrate. They are, speaking the truth, care for children, and the prohibition against murder. This criticism is that Rachel’s cites’ specific core standards are not uniform in all the societies, although they are common. One example is where some societies allow killing under certain circumstances. She also finds one area of variable in all societies, sexual morality. The truth is that moral standards vary from society to the other, and when they appear common, they cannot be clearly articulated.

9. The main features of Plato's theory of the moral forms are that moral standards are everlasting, fixed, and nonphysical Forms. The uppermost moral value is the Practice of the Good, which is absolute moral excellence. People become moral by sharing in the moral Forms. Moral knowledge is gained by recollecting moral forms based on past life happenstance.
10. The main features of Augustine's version of the theory of moral Forms are that he agreed with Plato on the existence of moral Forms. However, he held that they exist in God's mind and not in the distant cosmos, as Plato had suggested. Augustine held that Forms' knowledge is gained through divine illumination and not from past life experiences as advocated by Plato.
11. Aristotle states that Plato's view of Moral Forms did not explain the nature of behavior of things. Plato's theory failed to address why things move or change and did not have real connection with anything. This criticism loses the fact that we live in an imperfect world. Consequently, if we try to understand charity's concept by observing the world, we will have an insufficient concept. To gain better understanding, we need to remove our focus from the imperfect world to the perfect world which Plato offers.
12. Mackie's first criticism of Plato's view of the moral Forms is that the strange and spirit like realm which Plato alludes is sufficient reason to doubt its existence. The problem with this criticism is that what he perceives as strange may not be strange to others. Some individuals are convinced that there are peripheral truths to the human, which can only be grasped with the right mental vision.
13. According to Mackie, people indeed tend to make objective standards that are biased in origin. He views the society's demands on individuals as external to the individual.

Consequently, the individuals erroneously everything about demand is external, the premise under which Plato's theory hangs. His main question is whether to accept the theory advocated by Plato or the psychological projection theory. To him, the latter makes more sense. The problem with this criticism is its failure to provide an alternative theory that is more compelling than the projection theory. This leaves Plato's theory as the only plausible and reasonable theory.

14. One possible concession for relativists is accepting that the many standards which vary from culture to culture are essentially rules of etiquettes and not moral values. This concession however, misses the focal point of cultural relativism. That we cannot presume that one etiquette ought to be an etiquette in another culture. The second concession is existence of general or universal moral standards but may differ in application depending on different cultures. The difficulty in this concession is an explanation of what can be defined as a general principle. An example is on the general principle "do not kill" the principle does not explain whether killing animals or even killing persons in war or self-defense.
15. The first concession to moral objectivists is that societies have the power to develop major moral principles in a reliable and unvarying manner. The difficulty with this concession is that objectivists may find the societies unstable, as indeed they are, and might feel that morality is too essential to have the basis of unstable foundations. The second concession is that objectivists can accept that crucial morality standards can be based on human biology. The problem with this concession is that it will make morality changing and not eternal as they opine, making morality a product of evolution and social impulses that may evolve with time.

16. Sumner's main features view folkways as Societal Force, produced by numerous repetition of petty acts. The acts are repeated by many people who act similarly when faced with identical needs. The Folkways can be said to be right. This is because they are the correct ways of satisfying all interests. They are also traditional and exist while extending over the entire universe.
17. The main feature of Sumner's view of social mores is that people's social mores are consistently good for them, and their goodness or badness cannot be questioned. Mores adapted to the prevailing situation are said to be good while those that are not adapted are bad.
18. Sumner's view of the contributions of philosophy and religion to social mores is that religion and philosophy are not the basis or controllers of mores but are essential constituents of the mores. According to Schultze-Gavernitz, for most men, actions are influenced by developed and inherited aims and are not connected with mores' theoretic convictions. Besides, Schallmeyer shows that the difference between our religion's ideologies and our real behavior proves that the motives of our acts and how we judge other people's acts originate from our practical life and have little bearing on what we believe.
19. Rashdall believes that objective morality exists outside the human mind and the material realm because moral law is found in no individual human consciousness. Our ideas that objective reality resides in things themselves are only right if they are congruent with real and independent archetypes. On materialistic or natural conventions, moral epitome can barely be viewed as a real thing. Nor can it be viewed as a property of any real thing: it can only be a desire, a creation of the mind, which may be suitable to arouse efforts in

directions in which a person happen to need to move, but which cannot persuade respect when we feel no aspiration to act in conformism.

20. Rashdall believes that objective morality exists in God's mind because a moral ideal can only be present in a mind where all reality originates, and that is the mind of God. The belief in God, if not so apparent and chiefly a hypothesis of morality. The belief in an eternal spiritual and active self is still an assumption of morality which aiming to satisfy the demands of the consciousness.

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