

W. all moral actions
are relative". he talks

Experience, Human Nature



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T. Stace, a philosopher, in contrast to the view of the cultural relativist, "argues that one cannot conclude that all moral actions are relative". He talks about two moral theories, ethical absolutism and ethical relativism, and presents arguments for and against each. He groups ethical absolutists as the right wing, the conservative and the old fashioned, and the ethical relativists as the left wing, the up to date fellows, the revolutionaries.

Ethical absolutism is a simple and unwavering theory and that is that, "there is but one eternally true and valid moral code and that it applies with rigid impartiality to all men", and that it is "absolute and unvarying". The ethical absolutist does not proclaim his own moral code as the true or untrue one, nor does he commit to the credibility of his neighbors moral code, nor his ancestors, nor future generations. He will only commit to there being one morality applicable to all men in all times.

Ethical absolutism evolved from Christian theology, Christian monotheism, and that "God is the author of the moral law". Stace states that the revolt of the relativists against absolutism is based on the "decay of belief in the doctrines of orthodox religion". Today's skepticism takes away the support Christian monotheism gave to absolutism. Ethical relativism put simply by Stace is a denial of ethical absolutism. There is no absolute moral code. The relativist believes, I think, as an example, that what a Frenchman believes is right for him, is right for him, and at the same time may be wrong for his neighbor, the Spaniard, and that is acceptable. He believes there is no one absolute standard but that there are only local, transient, and variable

standards. One argument in favor of relativism is based upon the actual existence of various moral standards within our world.

Ruth Benedict's exploration of primitive cultures, where the development of localized social forms has remained intact and protected because of their isolation, shows us that morality is "culturally defined". She gives numerous examples of how what one culture considers morally acceptable behavior, another culture considers that same behavior as immoral and unacceptable, while each culture exists and survives on its own without any difficulty. Stace goes on to say that the above argument is a pretty weak one. Relativists can explain it by saying there is no one existent moral standard, and absolutists will say that there is one moral standard but these human beings are all ignorant of it. Another argument, and I like this one, "consists in alleging that no one has ever been able to discover upon what foundation an absolute morality could rest, or from what source a universally binding moral code could derive its authority". I'm not quite sure I understand the arguments against relativism. Perhaps relativists in simplest of terms, believe in, live and let live, but I don't think that is basic to human nature.

We continually have to judge and compare. On the basis of ethical relativism, any judgements we make can have no meaning. "A comparison of moral standards implies the existence of a superior standard applicable to both". There can be no judgement as to what is best. Lastly, Stace presents the argument of how the relativist will explain what the moral standards actually are within a social community and whose opinion within that community will be represented.

Whether it be the majority or the minority, Stace concludes the results could be disastrous. This was a lot to absorb, and I had to read it several times through, and I'm still not quite sure about it. In regard to ethical absolutism, my feeling is one of disagreement. I'm not sure of any benefit in believing that a true and absolute moral law exists at some time or place, while having no knowledge of what that law actually is. Also, if one questions the existence of God, the position held by the ethical absolutist must also be questioned.

My first impression upon the ethical relativist's position was a favorable one. It sounded ideal. The relativist believes that morals are culturally defined, and that what is moral in one culture is the