

Key themes

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Moral relativism is a philosophical notion that right and wrong are not absolute values, but rather personalized in accordance to the individual, the circumstances or the cultural orientation of that individual. This view holds that morality, ethical standards and positions on right and wrong are cultural and as such they are based on the individuals' choice. This concept can be applied positively to affect changes in law, such as promoting acceptance for other customs, or can be applied negatively in trying to justify wrongdoing. 1

There are three variations of moral relativism. Descriptive moral relativism provides that there are deep and widespread moral differences across different societies and these differences are weightier than the agreements that exist. Meta-ethical relativism on the other hand, provides that the falsity or the truth of moral judgments or their justifications are not universal but relative to the convictions, practices and traditions of a group. Normative moral relativism maintains that meta-ethical, moral realism suggests that we ought to tolerate the behavior of others, even where such behavior contradicts our cultural or personal standards. 2

Arguments for moral relativism include the diversity argument which provides that there is a great diversity in the notions of what is moral and what is immoral and each view on morality is correct. The humility argument provides that an individual is in no position to tell others that their moral beliefs are false and everyone's moral beliefs are true. People also accept moral relativism in order to tolerate and respect differing opinions on right and wrong. Problems of moral relativism include inconsistencies on what is right and wrong and the unacceptable consequences of the different views on what is moral and what is not. 3

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Reference list

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Velleman David, Foundations for Moral Relativism (Open Book Publishers, 2013).