

The challenge of cultural relativism

Psychology



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Relativism presents both arguments of cultural relativism. Rachels first starts that since various cultures have different morals, there is no universally or standard right moral thing. The correctness of a moral action only depends on the cultural practices of a given community. Cultural relativism depends on the principle that moral codes differ from culture to culture. For instance, British drivers drive on the left side of the road while it is the custom of American drivers to drive on the right side of the road. According to Rachels, both norms are correct relative to each culture. There is no independent standard of right and wrong by which they can be measured. Therefore, cultural relativism challenges the notion of universal moral truths and substitutes them with various cultural laws.

People have to embrace the attitude of tolerance towards the other cultural practices. Rachels opposes cultural relativism by comparing morality to geography. Rachels says that disagreement in the premise leads to no standard truth in the conclusion. The same systematic approach used to arrive at a conclusion in geography cannot be used for moral issues. The two are incompatible because morality is a distinct body of thought from geography. Geography is premised on adducible facts and evidence where the truth is indisputable. However, morality is an intangible and mystical trait that cannot be scientifically proven. Morality varies for each culture because societies develop differently according to their setting. There is no single standard measure of morality and to compare it to geography is unreasonable.

While scientists can illustrate to people satellite pictures of the earth's

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roundness, religious leaders do not have the concrete evidence to illustrate their beliefs. They can only repeat their creeds with the hope of convincing non-believers to adopt their beliefs. Rachels is out of order to regard morality as similar to science.

Cultural relativism implies that the majority rules. One can determine whether an action is right or wrong by consulting the present code of the community. The implication is that what is right for a culture is what is right by the majority or customary opinion. Cultural relativism implies that a person is wrong when they protest against an ethical code because they would be resisting the cultural laws that the society considers as right. Rachels argues that it is not incoherent to protest against the laws of a given community. However, in democratic societies, it is a person's basic right to protest against the majority view.

Cultural relativism is also unreasonable because it prevents people from questioning the customs and morality of other societies. It is retrogressive because it implies revising the previous ways of carrying out actions, which were in line with the standards of that past time. However, society transforms with each new generation and if the morals do not modify then people might be judged unfairly by past standards that are in line with the current status of doing things.

I believe the cultural relativism opinion is compelling but very irrational. Cultural relativism is sensible because no one is wrong or inferior to anyone else. However, societies cannot support this luxury. Societies require innovative thinkers that will question and protest societal existing cultural practices and finally initiate progress. Cultural relativism bars people from questioning the norm and is consequently not in line with <https://assignbuster.com/the-challenge-of-cultural-relativism/>

the nature of humankind. I am in agreement with Rachels on this view but disagree on morality. He regards morality to have the same standard as science. It is impossible because they are very incongruent. Science focuses on the understanding of the physical world whereas morality relates to the standard of right behavior.

Works Cited

Rachels, James. "The challenge of cultural relativism". 1986.