

Relativism and morality

Sociology



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Relativism and Morality BY YOU YOUR SCHOOL INFO HERE HERE Relativism and Morality Goodman's viewpoint that there are certain universal principles which are consistently wrong is somewhat flawed. Goodman (2010) highlights that rape, terrorism and murder (as three examples) should be considered wrongs within a global context. Murder, as Goodman identifies, is a wrong due to the fact that it violates the inherent rights of the individual. In essence, it destroys the individual and therefore cannot be debated since the victim is unable to engage in future philosophical arguments about right versus wrong. Rape, as yet another example, is a violation of the victim's personal will and also exploits the victim (Goodman, 2010). However, Goodman is attempting to impose a set of universalist values which are not always going to be embraced by different cultures. In Africa, as one example, rape is a common practice engaged with members of the military and within the family dynamic. When the individual that has been the victim of rape becomes accustomed to this lifestyle, without proper guidance about the morality and ethics of the act, they are simply not educated that rape within the family unit is not acceptable in most cultures. Therefore, without having a moral center within the African culture or government (or in education), whether the act of rape is wrong is completely relative. Mosser (2010) would likely defend the aforementioned argument, as he clearly indicates that the acceptability of moral versus amoral acts are directly linked to one's culture, religion, worldview and even one's personal set of values. Using, again, the aforesaid example of rape within the African family dynamic, if the local culture considers these acts to be moral and ethical, it would simply be one (or a handful) of individuals that would attempt to challenge the moral and ethical principles of rape. It would seem, however, that Goodman is

attempting to illustrate that it would be the majority within society that would be the proverbial gatekeepers of morality and ethics, thus being the dominant force in determining the moral and ethical acceptability of such issues such as rape, murder and even terrorism. However, society should consider that history often determines whether a group or individual should be considered a terrorist. For instance, there could be many British individuals that considered the war that occurred during American independence were all terrorists, as they defied the majority rule of the British empire during the time period. However, American history has painted the individuals that founded the United States as heroes that were simply defending the needs, wants and values of the American citizens during the Revolutionary War. Now, using the argument of the Revolutionary War as the primary example, Mosser is given support for the relativist view of morality and ethics. As he argues that relativism is related to one's personal values, culture, and even religion, he would likely ponder the American Revolution, using the worldview as an example, to recognize that not everyone in global culture views the founders of the American society as heroes and saviors. Instead, Mosser would likely engage in debates that recognize that morality and ethics are largely individual and cannot be justified by any one set of moral and ethical contracts. All situations that are questionable as it relates to morality and ethics illustrate that there are not simply some scenarios and human actions that are wrong and cannot be debated since they are massive violations of the individual will and generic human rights. When a tyrannical government is overthrown, thus liberating society from oppression or domination, it takes a group of individuals (whether private citizens or militaristic) to provide the tools or support

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necessary to achieve the goal of said liberation. Today's global culture, such as those supported by such organizations as the United Nations, tend to attempt to impose a universalist approach to guiding and critiquing ethical and moral behaviors. These organizations, and several others in global culture, have much support from society and global governments which seems to add more clout to the basic and generic human rights issues. It would be the majority, in such a case, that would dictate the acceptability and moral responsibility of certain human actions that should be considered to be immoral or unethical. However, if certain cultures began to reject this doctrine that rape, terrorism and murder are always wrong, it is likely that a more relativist viewpoint would be embraced, thus changing the dynamics of majority rule when it comes to determining whether certain situations are unethical or immoral. Having offered all of the aforesaid arguments, Goodman is not correct in stating that there are always going to be certain human actions that should absolutely be considered wrong. There cannot be a singular set of universal principles and social contracts that should guide global society. There is simply too much diversity in cultures, when taking a global viewpoint, to attempt to impose a singular, universalist set of values and ethical contracts. Eventually, these doctrines will be rejected by those who demand change, thus Goodman is really, after assessing the viability of his argument, simply using his own opinion which is absolutely not going to be shared by everyone in global society. References Goodman, Lenn E. (2010). Some Moral Minima, *The Good Society*, 19(1), pp. 87-94. Mosser, Kurt. (2010). *Ethics and Social Responsibility*. Pearson.