

Ethical relativism is the doctrine that the moral rightness and wrongness of actions varies from society to society and that there are no absolute universal moral standards binding on all men at all times. Accordingly, it holds that whether or not it is right for an individual to act in a certain way depends on or is relative to the society to which he belongs.¹

Deskriptiver Relativismus:

Es gibt eine große Diversität der Werte und moralischen Überzeugungen, die von Menschen (in verschiedenen Kulturen und in verschiedenen Zeitaltern) vertreten werden, wobei diese unterschiedlichen Werte und moralischen Überzeugungen auf fundamentale Weise konfliktieren.

Fundamentale Meinungsunterschiede bezüglich Werten und moralischen Überzeugungen bestehen, wenn

- (a) die unterschiedlichen Werte und moralischen Überzeugungen nicht durch unterschiedliche Meinungen über die Natur, das Verhältnis der Menschen zur Natur, die menschliche Natur, die beiden Geschlechter, die Religion usw. erklärt werden können,
- (b) die Meinungsunterschiede nicht durch unterschiedliche äußere Bedingungen erklärt werden können, so daß die gleichen Werte und Moralprinzipien nur unter unterschiedlichen Bedingungen angewandt werden.

Metaethischer Relativismus:

Es gibt nicht eine einzige wahre bzw. am besten begründete Moral, deren Prinzipien für alle Menschen gelten (unabhängig davon, ob sie tatsächlich von allen Menschen anerkannt werden).

Moralurteile sind wahr oder falsch relativ zu bestimmten Kulturen.

Normativer Relativismus:

Es ist moralisch falsch,

- (a) das Verhalten und die Praktiken von Menschen und Kulturen mit anderen Moralvorstellungen moralisch zu beurteilen und
- (b) sich in deren Angelegenheiten einzumischen.

Kulturrelativismus:

1. Variante des deskriptiven Relativismus:

Die fundamentalen Meinungsunterschiede hinsichtlich Werten und moralischen Überzeugungen sind kulturabhängig.

2. Variante des metaethischen Relativismus:

The moral theory of *cultural relativism*, roughly put, is this:

Although for every culture some moral judgements are valid, no moral judgement is *universally* valid, meaning valid for all cultures. Instead, every moral judgement is culturally relative.²

¹ John Ladd (Hrsg.), *Ethical Relativism*, Belmont 1973, S. 1, zitiert aus Louis P. Pojman, *Ethics. Discovering Right and Wrong*, Belmont 1990, S. 20.

² John J. Tilley (1998): Culturalism Relativism, Universalism, and the Burden of Proof, *Millennium* 27, S. 275–97: S. 275.

Absolutismus:

1. Es gibt eine einzige wahre bzw. am besten begründete Moral, deren Prinzipien für alle Menschen gelten (unabhängig davon, ob sie tatsächlich von allen Menschen anerkannt werden).
2. Es gibt bestimmte Handlungsweisen, die unter allen Umständen, d. h. unabhängig von allen Konsequenzen verboten oder geboten sind. Anders formuliert: Es gibt bestimmte moralische Regeln, die ausnahmslos gelten, d. h. die unter keinen Umständen verletzt werden dürfen.

Universalismus:

1. Einige Moralurteile sind universell gültig (d. h. sie gelten für alle Menschen).
2. Alle Menschen sind in moralischer Hinsicht gleich. Die Zugehörigkeit zu bestimmten Gruppen wie Nation, Rasse, Klasse, Geschlecht usw. rechtfertigt keine unterschiedliche Behandlung der Menschen:

As a first approximation, ethical universalism may be defined as the doctrine that all persons ought to be treated with equal and impartial positive consideration for their respective goods or interests. [...] according to ethical particularism, one ought to give preferential consideration to the interests of some persons as against others, including not only oneself but also other persons with whom one has special relationships, such as for example, the members of one's own family or friendship circle or local community or nation or various other restricted social groups. (Alan Gewirth, *Ethical Universalism and Particularism*, *Journal of Philosophy* 85 (1988), S. 283-302: S. 283)

Objektivismus:

objectivism The general idea that what binds people in morality binds them independently of any particular person's or group of persons' belief or opinion.³

Ethical objectivists [...] hold that the validity of moral judgments depends on factors independent of human beings and that moral judgments are true or false regardless of what human beings think about them.⁴

When applied to morality, the terms 'objective' and 'subjective' each connote a family of characteristics. That is, the characteristics are not necessarily related but are frequently found together in descriptions of the nature of morality. When a philosopher calls morality objective, for instance, he or she is making several and perhaps all of the following claims:

1. Moral statements have truth values;
2. There are good and bad arguments for the moral positions people take;
3. Nonmoral facts (states of affairs that obtain in the world and that can be described without use of moral terms such as 'ought,' 'good,' and 'right') are relevant to the assessment of the truth value of moral statements;
4. There are moral facts (that may or may not be claimed to be reducible in some way to nonmoral facts);
5. When two moral statements conflict as recommendations to action, only one statement can be true;
6. There is a single true morality.

When morality is called subjective, several and perhaps all of the above claims are denied.⁵

³ J. Carl Ficarrotta (1998): *Moral Relativism*, in *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, hrsg. von Ruth Chadwick, San Diego, Vol. 3, S. 275–88: S. 275.

⁴ C. E. Harris, Jr. (1992): *Applying Moral Theories*, 2. Aufl., Belmont, Cal., S. 35f.

It is commonly assumed that any plausible conception of objectivity must establish that there is a reliable connection between any inquiry described as objective and some realm that exists independent of that inquiry. Yet this assumption unwisely ignores the grammar, in the Wittgensteinian sense, of the concept of objectivity. For to assert the objectivity of any human inquiry is, first of all, to affirm the possibility that the results of that inquiry might transcend the “intensely human” limitations of its methods. Any claim that some inquiry is objective thus embodies an *aspiration* to the transcendent validity of the outcome of inquiry. Acknowledging this link between objectivity and human aspirations, moreover, helps illuminate familiar concerns about objectivity in everyday life. An interviewer who seeks objective assessments of applicants for a job, like judges in a piano competition who seek objective grounds for choosing a winner or a professor who seeks to assess student essays objectively, aspires to results which transcend the limitations of her preconceptions and unreflective preferences. In each case objectivity demands reliance on grounds of assessment that can be justified to any reasonable and qualified judge. Ideally, objectivity demands that methods of inquiry entirely eliminate the influence of the narrowly personal perspective of the inquiring subject – even though in most everyday inquiries objectivity is always a matter of degree, a function of the extent to which the methods of inquiry effectively *minimize* the perspective of the inquiring subject.

[...]

[...] it is important to note a second crucial feature of the grammar of the concept of objectivity. For any claim that some inquiry is objective also implicitly asserts that it is possible to secure uncoerced agreement on at least some results of that inquiry. In fact, the occurrence of uncoerced agreement on some conclusion often serves – and I think reasonably – to bolster confidence in aspirations to transcendent validity, and hence in the objectivity of the inquiry in question. This is most obvious, perhaps, in the informal inquiries of everyday life. Thus, the professor whose colleagues without prompting second her assessment of an essay reasonably concludes that her assessment meets the demands of objectivity appropriate to the inquiry. But important defenses of the objectivity of science cite the regularity of uncoerced agreement in science as compelling evidence that science’s aspirations to transcendent validity are rational.⁶

Objective knowledge is commonly thought to require belief, truth, and justification. Following this understanding, let us say that *a person knows a moral proposition* (for example, that we ought to change an unfair policy) only if the person believes it, it is true, and the person is justified in believing it. On this account, asserting that the proposition is true should be understood in a straightforward sense at least in many respects similar to the sense of “true” in statements such as “It is true that the wolves have returned.” Thus, the truth of a proposition is usually independent of the attitudes people happen to have towards it. Saying that a person is justified in believing a proposition means that the person has sufficient evidence, reasons, grounds, etc. for believing it is true in this sense. Now, let us say that *morality is objective* only if the following three conditions obtain: (a) moral propositions are ordinarily true or false (they have “truth-value”); (b) many moral propositions are true; and (c) persons have the capacity to be, and in fact often are, justified in believing moral propositions (specifically, believing true ones and disbelieving false ones). On this conception, moral objectivists believe that morality is objective, while moral nonobjectivists deny this because they think either that moral propositions are never true or that no one is ever justified in believing moral propositions (or both).⁷

⁵ David B. Wong (1984): *Moral Relativity*, Berkeley, S. 1f.

⁶ Michele M. Moody-Adams (1997): *Fieldwork in Familiar Places. Morality, Culture, and Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., S. 178f.

⁷ Christopher W. Gowans (2000): Introduction: Debates about Moral Disagreements, in *Moral Disagreements. Classic and Contemporary Readings*, hrsg. von Christopher W. Gowans, London, S. 1-43: S. 3.

Uneinigkeitsargument gegen die Objektivität der Moral

Nach Christopher W. Gowans (2000): Introduction: Debates about Moral Disagreements,
in *Moral Disagreements. Classic and Contemporary Readings*, hrsg. von Christopher W. Gowans, London, S. 1-43.

