

From Moral Relativism to Tolerance

I Vulgar Relativism

1. 'Right' means 'right for a given society.'
2. 'Right for a given society' is to be understood in functionalist terms.
3. Therefore, it is wrong for the members of one society to condemn or interfere with the values of another society.

2 How many justified moral beliefs are there?

1. Moral Relativism: *lots*. Each society has its own set that is correct for its members.
2. Moral Universalism: *some*. There's only one true set for everyone, regardless of what the members of different societies believe.
3. Moral Nihilism: *none*. There are no justified moral beliefs.

3 Undermining reasons for intolerance

3.1 Conservative formulation

1. A is justified in interfering with B on the basis of its moral code only if its moral code is correct. [Platitude¹]
2. Suppose moral relativism is true: each society has its own standards of morality that are correct for its members. [Definition]
3. Therefore, the members of A would be wrong to think that their moral code is correct and a conflicting one is incorrect. [From 2]
4. Therefore, the members of different societies should not interfere with one another on the basis of their moral codes: they have no reason to do so. [From 1-3]

¹Note. This is a *necessary* condition of justifiably interfering, not a *sufficient* one. Interfering might be stupid or wrong even if this is true.

3.2 Revisionary formulation

1. A is justified in interfering with B on the basis of its moral code only if its moral code is correct. [same as above]
2. A's moral code is correct only if it is correct for both A and B. [new premise]
3. Suppose moral relativism is true: each society has its own standards of morality that are correct for its members. [same as above]
4. Therefore, the members of A would be wrong to think that their moral code is correct and a conflicting one is incorrect. [same as above]
5. Therefore, the members of different societies should not interfere with one another on the basis of their moral codes: they have no reason to do so. [same as above]