

# (moral) relativism,

The concept of "relativism" can be applied in two separate senses, epistemological and ethical. Epistemological relativism is the assertion that there is no absolute truth. Protagoras offered the first documented proposition of this view when he said: "Man is the measure of all things; of what is, and of what is not." Here, Protagoras argued that what a person believes is true for him or her. There is no absolute truth against which individual beliefs may be judged. If man is the measure, then each man is the measure of truth for himself. Modern proponents of epistemological relativism are Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty.

More specifically related to sociology is ethical or moral relativism, the view that there is no universal sense of morality or no absolute standpoint from which to make moral judgments. Proponents of ethical relativism cite various anthropological evidence of diverse customs and mores in separate social systems. Some theorists claim that this cultural variation is equivalent to 'incommensurability,' or complete lack of shared concepts. These claims ignore, however, some basic human values shared cross-culturally: the tendencies to condemn a leader who exploits his people and turn to an impartial arbitrator to judge disputes. A fundamental inconsistency in the assertion of moral relativism must also be pointed out. If the lack of an absolute morality is taken as support for tolerating all cultural diversity, then this attitude must be universally approvable and, therefore, constitute a moral absolute. It remains, then, for sociological and anthropological research to determine the limits of cultural diversity and for philosophical analysis to assess the implications of this variation.

## World of Sociology.

### RELATIVISM

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