

A CRITICAL VIEW ON NORMATIVE CULTURAL RELATIVISM

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ABSTRACT

Cultural relativism, which has been discussed in the different modes of thought for many years by a great number of philosophers, greets the eye as one of the crucial subjects of philosophy. Whilst a number of philosophers have a tendency for supporting it, the other majority takes a critical stance towards it as opponents. But it is still unclear whether or not it may be possible to find a way out in order to assert that there could be a middle way. As the third group, the philosophers, who argue that there could be a middle way to discuss the matter, strongly take an attention of two categories concerning cultural relativism, namely descriptive and normative cultural relativism. Since descriptive cultural relativism is just due diligence, that is, it is only interested in the factual observations on cultures and it reports what it notes without any judgments and evaluations, descriptive cultural relativism says normatively nothing on the moral dimensions of cultures and societies. It may be the best way that the general proclivity to evaluate the matter is to focus on the arguments for/against to most specifically normative cultural relativism. In this paper, what we have tried to do is to emphasize the arguments for and against to normative cultural relativism so as to show whether or not it is sound and supportable.

Key words: Cultural relativism, diversity, tolerance, Gilbert Harman, Hitler, internal and external norms.

NORMATİF KÜLTÜREL GÖRECELİK ÜZERİNE ELEŞTİREL BİR BAKIŞ

ÖZET

Yıllardır değişik düşünce biçimleri altında, büyük bir filozof topluluğu tarafından tartışılan kültürel görecelik, hala felsefenin en önemli konularından birisi olarak göze çarpmaktadır. Bir takım filozoflar, onu savunmaya yönelik bir temayüle sahipken, diğer bir çoğunluk ise muhalif olarak ona eleştirel bir tavır takınmıştır. Ancak, konuyla ilgili orta bir yolun varlığını iddia etmek için bir çıkış yolunun bulunup bulunamayacağı hala belirsizdir. Çözümüne dair ileri sürülen üçüncü bir bakış açısı olarak, konuyu tartışmak için orta bir yolun bulunabileceğine ilişkin görüşü savunan filozoflar güçlü bir şekilde kültürel görecelikle ilgili olan iki kategoriye, betimleyici ve normatif kültürel görecelik, dikkat çekerler. Betimleyici kültürel görecelik sadece durum tespiti olduğu, yani, sadece kültürler üzerine olgusal gözlemlerle ilgilendiği ve her hangi bir şekilde onlara ilişkin değerlendirme ve yargılamalarda bulunmadan not aldığı şeyi rapor ettiği için, normatif

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olarak kültürler ve toplumların ahlaki boyutları hakkında bir şey söylemez. Meseleyi sağlıklı şekilde değerlendirmek için özellikle normatif kültürel göreceliğin lehinde ve aleyhinde serdedilmiş argümanlara yoğunlaşmak belki de en iyi yoldur. Bu makalede yapmaya çalıştığımız şey normatif kültürel göreceliğin lehte ve aleyhte argümanlarına vurgu yaparak, onun anlamlı ve savunulabilir olup olmadığını göstermek olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel görecelik, farklılık, tolerans, Gilbert Harman, Hitler, dâhili ve harici normlar.

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, relativism has been strongly discussed in the different modes of thought by a number of philosophers. Protagoras (481-420 BC), who was one of them, claimed that “man is the measure of all things.” The sentence can be taken as the first formula in question. But right after it needs to be asked if it bears moral relativism in itself. We may find a way out in order to set out the questioning. Prior to Protagoras, Xenophanes (570-480 BC) by objecting ironically to people, who had different conceptions of God, told that “If cows, horses and lions had hands, and were able to draw with their hands, and do the work men do, horses would draw images of gods like horses and cattle like cattle.”¹ It may be assumed that through his assertion, Xenophanes criticized the relativist picture which dominated human minds in the antique times, as well as Karl Popper (1902-1994) who qualified to relativism as modern irrational system.² Relativism also prevents its actuality in our today’s world. Whilst a certain number of philosophers courageously propound their thoughts in favour of relativism, the other majority puts forward their considerations against relativism. Well, it can be estimated that both the first group and the second group have presented their arguments and evidences in order to verify their assertions. Now, in this paper, their contentions shall be evaluated. I ought to mention that I shall refer to “moral relativism” by the concept of “relativism”.

However, moral relativism includes moral subjectivism in terms of considering value pluralism with reference to individual, what we want to do is to show some remarks on cultural relativism with its arguments for/against by ignoring subjectivism due to limitation of space. Thus the aim of this piece of

¹ From Clement of Alexandria, *Strumeteis*, (within, Maria Baghramian, *Relativism* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 23.

² Karl Popper, *The Myth of Framework; In Defence of Science and Rationality* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 33.

paper is to comment on the arguments for and against to cultural relativism in order to show weak points in supporting to cultural relativism.

The first thing to be done is to focus on what cultural relativism is in order to direct us to the concrete discussion. By speculating about what cultural relativism is and how we point out it and by which we refer to it, a field of work could be constructed. Having been concentrated on what cultural relativism is, whether or not it could be divided into the different categories shall be questioned and the issue shall be separated into two sections which explain the arguments for and against to cultural relativism. In the first section, basically, the supporting arguments for cultural relativism will be put forth and attempted to show the points of a defender of a form of moral relativism, namely Gilbert Harman. In the second section, the arguments against to cultural relativism will be presented and by considering a whole picture, we will attempt to indicate whether or not cultural relativism is strong and reasonable to be supported.

1. Cultural Relativism

A number of philosophers consider relativism as a common response to the deepest conflict people face in their daily life and they think that relativism is against to universal validity and justifiability.³ The issue, which is not new, cultural relativism, has ancient origins based on the works of a famous historian, Herodotus (484-425 BC). He gave place a couple of instances so as to show cultural differences. There is a well-known story related to cultural relativism in his book, *The History*. Darius, a king of ancient Persia, called Greeks to ask how much they would be paid before they would eat the bodies of their dead fathers. They answered by being shocked that no sum of money could have them do such a thing. Then Darius asked Callatians, an Indian tribe, customarily eating the bodies of their dead fathers, how much they would be paid before they would burn the bodies of their dead fathers. The answer was the same, no sum of money could get them to do such that.⁴ Cultural relativism has, therefore, been established firmly on a point that different cultures have different moral codes.

It should be taken into account that the discussions may be failed and no progress can be made, when philosophers sign on a certain meaning of

³ David Wong, *Relativism*, (within, Peter Singer Ed., *A Companion to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 442.

⁴ Herodotus, *The History*, Book 3, Chapter: 38, trans. D.Grene (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988)

cultural relativism. So it is suggested that cultural relativism is divided into two categories, namely, descriptive and normative cultural relativism. So that people, who want to speculate on cultural relativism, may reach a consensus at least they may express their ideas properly and more systematically.

It need to be explained what is meant by the two categories, namely, normative cultural relativism and descriptive cultural relativism. Basically, it can be said that descriptive cultural relativism is based on empirical observations in varied societies. It is also said that different cultures have different systems of beliefs and values; this diversity would be in factual rather than in ethical. It is true that most societies have different judgments about value; this is rather anthropological and sociological assertion, as accepting descriptive cultural relativism.⁵ This factual assertion can be advanced by claiming that “two conflicting basic judgements may be equally valid.”⁶ In that case, it cannot be considered that there is universally absolute moral values and moral codes, and this process and the cast of mind leads to a conclusion; one ought to solely follow his own cultural moral codes. By this assertion, normative cultural relativism is revealed. Normative cultural relativism claims that “it is wrong to pass judgement on others who have substantially different values, or to try to make them conform to one’s values, for the reason that their values are as valid as one’s own.”⁷

Descriptive cultural relativism might be accepted for it is just a factual assertion which mentions that there are different value perceptions from culture to culture without judging any moral consideration and asserting that two conflicting basic value judgements are equally true. It might be said that the society can perform differently whatever their general moral rules are.⁸ To be extended, descriptive cultural relativism is a soft account of cultural relativism. It should be questioned of whether it does give any way to universality of value and moral codes. At least, it may be asserted that descriptive cultural relativism is much closer to universality of value and universal moral codes than normative cultural relativism. For it does not have any claim on the validity of codes of any culture, its role is just to observe on cultures and to make note what it sees and thinks about different societies.

To sum up, so far, we have referred to just two kinds of cultural relativism. One of them is descriptive cultural relativism and another one is normative cultural relativism. The former is a purely descriptive claim that

⁵ William Frankena, *Ethics* (New Jersey: Prentice Press, 1973), p. 109.

⁶ *Ibid*, 109.

⁷ David Wong, *Relativism*, p. 442.

⁸ Bernard Gert, *Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 118.

different societies disagree on at least a small number of moral judgments and considerations. Descriptive cultural relativism basically relies on factual claims and observations, and does not claim truthness and rightness of codes and norms of any society. On the other hand, the latter, i.e. normative cultural relativism conveys a claim about rightness of moral codes of any culture. It claims that people ought to comply with the moral norms and judgments of their own culture. When normative cultural relativism is accepted as a merely correct way, whether or not the claims that which convey the assertions of absolute or universal truth on morality can be questioned and the worry whether or not it can be talked about universal human rights, does, therefore, remain ambiguous.

Thus, the actual problematic field in cultural relativism related to moral philosophy seems to be normative cultural relativism. It accepts the descriptive one's claim but exceeds it. In this paper, the centre point will be on normative cultural relativism. Now, let us take a close look at the arguments for and against to normative cultural relativism.

1.1. The Arguments For Cultural Relativism

a) The Arguments From Cultural Diversity and Mind-Singled

As a basis for normative cultural relativism, it is wrong to impose one's morality on others. Ruth Benedict (1887-1948), an important anthropologist claimed that what is thought as normalness-abnormalness varies greatly between societies, that is, normalness and anomalousness are indicated by societies within which they have appeared. So people live in pursuant of normalness and anomalousness of their cultures.⁹ "Moral rightness and wrongness vary from place to place without any absolute or universal moral standards that could apply to all persons at all times"¹⁰ Somehow language changes from society to society, it is normal that moral codes change according to cultures.¹¹ In this view, a person, who lives in a particular society, is required to conform to society's own moral codes in order to keep up with social life, since her/his society indicates the forms of normal and abnormal behaviour so that he can comply with.

Normative cultural relativists think that "moral beliefs and practices differ across cultures. Therefore no one set of moral beliefs has a monopoly on

⁹ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (London: Penguin, 1934), p. 43.

¹⁰ Tom Beauchamps, *Philosophical Ethics* (New York: Mc Graw-Hill Publishing Company), p. 33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

the truth.”¹² So the argument from cultural diversity for cultural relativism can be formulated so; there is no single morality that is universally accepted (since empirical observations on societies show that, say cultural relativists) then there is no morality which ought to be universally followed. Human beings as moral beings follow their own societies’ forms of normal and abnormal behaviour in order to behave morally in the light of cultural relativism. But they do not find any universal moral codes and considerations, because simple-minded shows us there are a lot of moral codes relating to their cultures.

It may be wondered whether or not we can deduct a claim saying that ‘human beings ought to conform to their own cultural codes’ from merely factual observations say that ‘there are a great number of societies in which there are totally different moral codes and applications which cannot be reconciled with each other and there is no universal moral value at all’. J. Mackie, in order to show that there is no objective moral value, offered two arguments namely, the argument from relativity and the argument from queerness. Since the second one is concerned with directly subjectivity, therefore it will be ignored. Mackie explained the first one like this, “The argument from relativity has as its premise the well-known variation in moral codes from one society to another and from one period to another, and also the differences in moral beliefs between different groups and classes within a complex community.”¹³ But still it remains equivocal whether we can conclude a value judgment from merely factual observations. I shall return this question later on.

As it can be understood, normative cultural relativists would like to distinguish between the context of object and that of judgement. According to them, there can be two different ethical judgements about the same object. And they can be equally valid because judgements are made from the different judgement context.¹⁴ A judgement context can be constructed within a social environment, this point was touched by Gilbert Harman, for Harman is replaced in the next section, let us see Benedict’s points: “From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behaviour. By the time, he can talk, he is the little creature of his culture and by the time he is... able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities, his impossibilities.”¹⁵ As mentioned before, the question of whether or not a value judgment can be concluded from merely

¹² Benn Piers, *Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 16.

¹³ John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 36.

¹⁴ Stephen Darwal, *Philosophical Ethics* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), p.65.

¹⁵ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, pp. 2-3.

factual observations remains unanswered. Firstly, it would be thought that a society affects to a person, who lives in that society by its customs and traditions. However, it should not be meant that the society should completely shape the person's moral character. Secondly, the societies, which unconsciously and paternalistically apply their internal ethical norms in order to regulate their own life, may apply other external and universal moral norms in favour of universal human rights, provided they learn more reasonable and effective moral norms. Thirdly, cultural relativism would seem morally wrong to its persons. As put forward at the beginning of section, it is morally wrong to impose one's morality on others. This claim can also be accepted by normative cultural relativist. In this sense, is it acceptable for a normative cultural relativist, who claims that no one set of moral beliefs has a monopoly on the truth, to impose his own cultural moral codes to any member of his own culture? It is also wondered whether cultural relativism leads to cultural imperialism in the sense which we have questioned.

b) The Argument from Tolerance and Harman's Supporting Argument for Cultural Relativism

It can be claimed that it is consistent to accept the fact that cultures appear to have at least a small number of different norms by which they live.¹⁶ So they are right to expect respect from the different societies. And the fact that a given practice is morally wrong in one particular society does not entail that it is morally wrong in another. Since cultural relativism is based on a point that cultures disagree widely about morality,¹⁷ all cultures should be tolerant with each other.¹⁸ So it can be understood that tolerance should be a maxim for cultural relativists. By accepting tolerance, normative cultural relativists accept a universal mode. But in this case, which moral codes can be respected and which ones cannot, do not show us a certain criteria. So it may be offered a distinction between morals and mores. By the first concept, I mean morality, that is, the practices and treatment of people to each other. By the latter one, I mean harmless practices and traditions. Well, it can be morally right to claim that nobody ought to deliberately intrude and invade any one's harmless mores and morals.

Our claim should not be misunderstood. It also might be acceptable that every culture has at least a small number of moral codes, like tolerance or any other value or virtue, which cannot be contradict with anyone's cultural ones. In the light of these speculations, whether or not the existence of universal

¹⁶ Dwight Furrow, *Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 35.

¹⁷ Harry Gensler, *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 16.

¹⁸ David Wong, *Moral Relativity* (California: University of California Press, 1984), p. 181.

value like tolerance jeopardizes the claim of normative cultural relativism seems as a wonder. That is, for normative cultural relativist, tolerance is a highly important value in order to support and apply comfortably his/her own cultural moral codes against other cultural societies. Indeed, by giving place to tolerance as a moral value, he/she does not want any culture to intrude his/her culture. In that sense, he/she accepts a universal moral value. But what is the drawback to find out another universal moral value like tolerance and at the end of the process to reach a universal moral system?

When passed on the other argument related to cultural relativism, an outstanding argument was presented by Gilbert Harman. It is impossible for us to discuss his all opinions owing to limitation of space but the most important parts can be introduced in the paper.

Gilbert Harman firstly represents a pattern for relativism that he will translate into moral relativism later. According to Harman, “something that is moving in relation to one spatio-temporal framework can be at rest in relation to another.”¹⁹ His pattern of thought particularly concerned with relativism is converted into moral relativism in this way, “what is morally right in relation to one moral framework can be morally wrong in relation to a different moral framework. And no moral framework is objectively privileged as the one true morality.”²⁰

Gilbert Harman offers two concepts in order to logically defend (normative) cultural relativism, namely, inner judgements and moral bargaining (agreement). He puts forward firstly inner judgements. “(Inner) judgements in which we say that someone should or ought to have done something or that someone was right or wrong to have done something.”²¹ Inner judgement is shaped by (social) agreement within social context. Harman gives an example about related issue. “...Intelligent being from outer space land on Earth, there is no sound to judge their badly acting towards people, because they do not know concern for human life and happiness. To act badly towards people does not give them a reason to avoid the action.”²² According to Gilbert Harman, people can call them savages but they cannot tell that they ought not to have acted badly. Because Harman thinks that they have inner judgements constructed by their own context apart from human beings?

¹⁹ Gilbert Harman-Judith Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) p. 3.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

²¹ Gilbert Harman, “*Moral Relativism Defended*”, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1, p. 5.

²² Ibid, p. 5.

When it is looked at Harman's concept of moral bargain, he says that "...relativism can be formulated as an intelligible thesis, the thesis that morality derives from an implicit agreement and that moral judgements are in a logical sense, made in relation to such agreement."²³ According to Harman, if speaker and audience share the same judgement, it can be said that they are in bargain with each other. But this agreement is valid only in a society. "By a moral system of coordinates' I mean a set of values (standards, principles, etc.) perhaps on the model of the laws of one or another state. Whether something is wrong in relation to a given system of coordinates is to be determined by the system..."²⁴ But I may question whether or not every society should reach an agreement on same judgments or rather whether mankind cannot be in bargain at least on minimal moral values, and whether there cannot be found out other possible ways more than two possible ways. That is, according to Harman, members of a society can either be in bargain or not on any specific matter. But it seems to us that Harman does not see other possible ways. For example, in a society, all people may not be on the same wave; moreover two different societies may agree with each other on a number of specific moral values and they can differ from each other in the sense of mores, which does not cause any damage to each other. So we can prolong the examples which may be thought that Harman does not consider. Harman attempts to put his speculations into practice by giving a concrete and a famous example on Hitler.

Harman thinks that even though Hitler was an extraordinarily evil man, it cannot be said that Hitler was morally wrong since he depended on a principle reason (inner judgement and agreement in his society) that is not shared by most of today's people. So should we judge Hitler with reference to our morality? According to Harman, it will be useless.²⁵ The questionings whether or not Gilbert Harman is right on thinking so or to what extent he can be right shall be placed in the following section.

1.2. The Arguments Against to Cultural Relativism

a) The Practical and General Arguments Against to Cultural Relativism

The arguments for normative cultural relativism have been explored in the first section. Here what we attempt to do is to examine into the contra-arguments on normative cultural relativism. As seen, normative cultural

²³ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁴ Gilbert Harman-Judith Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*, p. 13.

²⁵ Gilbert Harman, "Moral Relativism Defended", pp. 7-8.

relativists can object to universally absolute moral values by saying that morality is a product of culture, but they seem to ignore that even though all books are the product of their culture, they attempt to reveal universal truths.²⁶ Normative cultural relativists have deduced that there is no universally moral value from some empirical observations. But relevant to the subject Julia Driver says that “cultural differences are not evidence for the view that there is no universal truth to morality- there could be such non-relative truth, but people are mistaken about it or unaware of it, just as it was true that ‘the earth orbits the sun’ even 500 years ago when few people believed it.”²⁷ Since normative cultural relativists have not allocated which one is wrong or right, they have accepted all things are true or wrong in their own context. But they have not thought there may be an authority for morality; somehow, despite of the fact that doctors have a raw on important issues, they are still expert and more faithful than a layman, that is, just as doctors are authorities on a number of specific topics, so cannot an authority be also accepted in morality?

There is always a situation for normative cultural relativists to contradict themselves in practice on condition that we assume a possible world in which we can suppose that there is a relativist society within all societies are absolutist. According to relativist society, there of course, is not a universal truth. But we can also suppose that somehow all societies would be annihilated except the relativist ones. So henceforth, they would be mere society and no longer, they would be relativist but absolutist. Two points can be mentioned; even though this society is pure one, they accept that they are theoretically relativist. But in spite of the fact that they can accept themselves as relativist, they cannot show it in this possible world by their applications. So, on the one hand they will be so-called relativist, on the other hand, they will be absolutist. For they have internal norms which could impose their own member to conduct. It will bring about logically impossible ways.

In the framework of cultural relativism, a person should follow his own group moral codes. But which group? As the person belongs to a number of societies, that is, he can convey a set of different roles in a society. Naturally in that case, he can live practical contradiction in cultural relativism.

Normative cultural relativism claims that ‘something is good’ means that it is a socially approved in a society. But should the society include minority groups, will they always be wrong in the social context? Maybe a minority group is right in some issue. In that case, should they wait until they become

²⁶ Harry Gensler, *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction*, p. 16.

²⁷ Julia Driver, *Ethics* (London: Blackwell, 2008), p. 19.

majority? This point seems to include some practical problems for normative cultural relativism.

Supposing that a society, some people are colour blind; everyone claims that they like red. But actually colour blind people like green without recognizing truth and how can they evaluate their knowledge on green or actual red? With reference to this analogy, Can it be said that there are some failing people in cultural relativism as well? According to normative cultural relativists, the moral reformists such as prophets, intellectual activists and so on might be bad people for they acted against their social moral codes. However, they do not seem to give any proper evidence in order to show so.

b) Mathematical-Logical Argument Against to Cultural Relativism

It may seem a nice curiosity whether or not moral value is a priori. (David Ross) says that “he cannot decide whether or not to approve of something until we have a reason to do so; the reason why we approve of an action is that we recognise in it the attribute of rightness.”²⁸ Most philosophers think that moral value about rightness can directly be comprehended; moral value should be based on reason and it should be a priori like mathematical objects.²⁹ “We have to reason about what our goals should be on reason about the best way of accomplishing them.”³⁰ Since this issue is quite controversial, we want to carry on by supposing that moral values are a priori like mathematical and geometrical values.

What we would like to do is to translate cultural normative relativist language to mathematical language by making cultural relativist language symbolic. Cultural relativism claims that “all moralities are equally true;”³¹ so we can formulate and translate this premise into mathematical language as follows:

A is socially approved, then it is true according to X society

B is socially approved, then it is true according to Y society

A=B because both of them are true with reference to internal norms which are valid for their own society, let me translate into mathematical language. If A=B; then

A2=AB

²⁸ Deborah Mabbet, *An Introduction to Ethics* (London: Hutchinson University Press, 1966), p. 93.

²⁹ Takiyettin Mengüşoğlu, *Felsefeye Giriş* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi,, 2003), pp. 265-266.

³⁰ Dwight Furrow, *Ethics*, p. 34.

³¹ David Wong, *Relativism*, p. 446.

$$A^2-B^2=AB-B^2$$

$$(A-B)(A+B)=B(A-B)$$

$$A+B=B$$

$$2B=B$$

$$2=1$$

If moral value is a priori like mathematical value, then how can the mathematical process be explained even though we know the process totally wrong? It can be said that it is a self-contradictory process according to mathematical language; therefore cultural relativism is self-contradictory in itself.

c) The Critical Thoughts on Tolerance Argument and Harman's Points

Is tolerance compulsory for normative cultural relativism? Relativists generally say that tolerance is morally virtuous. But for whom toleration is virtuous? Should it be for everyone then, a normative cultural relativist society has at least one moral value to which applies universally.³² Someone says that "each community is correct unless they are absolutists." But this premise stipulates actually tolerance for every society except absolutist one. By this premise, normative cultural relativism will be useless; secondly, it will decompose its own argument. Basically to offer tolerance unquestioningly is a kind of absolutism. For the society which is not absolutist should explain its claim to their people who might be absolutist. If it says to them, this is our compulsory moral code as a society; you must compulsorily behave in pursuant of tolerance. Does not it refute its relativist claims?

Let us take a closer look at Harman's points. As it can be remembered that he says that people can call Hitler as an evil and a bad person; but they cannot say that Hitler ought not to have acted so due to fact that they do not share the inner judgements and the agreement with Hitler. So people cannot condemn him in this case. This point seems to convey some weakness in itself. Bernard Gert says that "those who held that a person cannot make any moral judgements about people in other societies can hold ethical relativism, for example, that only Germans living at the time can condemn Hitler."³³ This limitation seems absurd for people, if there is a savagery without any proper reason in any society, this can be called as an atrocity by all member of the world. Because it is against universal human right, because it is against moral

³² Benn Piers, *Ethics*, p. 19.

³³ Bernard Gert, *Morality*, p. 9.

thinking, because it is against conscience. On the other hand, it might be said that there is no point in coming social reformers to the backward societies in Harman's point, since the duty cannot be reconsidered in the aspect of the society whose members apply to only internal moral codes for their internal applications and interactions.

Suppose that a society has the history of massacre, but then society changes its history with better one by giving up massacre, and the society criticizes itself for former actions. It can accept its fault about why it would not return from error earlier. This case does not seem to be explained by the inner judgements in Harman's context, because he talked about the inner judgements but did not mention how they can be changed.

CONCLUSION

So far we have attempted to indicate whether normative cultural relativism is conceivable and supportable by highlighting the arguments for/against it. We consider that despite of the fact that normative cultural relativism has some arguments and supporters, it seems a little queer and self-contradictory. It can be clarified to imperialise culture by imposing own culture on another one is something, to tell reasonably rightness and wrongness of any society is another thing. It seems to me more plausible to accept normative cultural relativism as contradictory in itself and insufficient to approach the issues.

We could reasonably think that there should be general and universal criteria over which moral norms are evaluated and to which apply all cultural societies and on which all the members of the world make a minimal consensus. By the way, the criteria should not be bound up any cultural background and cultural society. Nowadays, people can compromise on a number of moral norms with each other, and this experience indicates that people reach the universal moral codes which can be applied to all cultural societies. It can be also reasonable that every society can have a different set of lives. But it may be allowed them as long as they are harmless and till an extent in which no offence is against to universal human rights. They can be called mores, which are harmless practices conducted by different societies out of morals. People do not have to conform to mores, or rather they may not be judged provided they do not abide by them. This classification may provide us a possible way out.

The second way out possibly also can be alleged, for presenting it, there are a small number of concepts to introduce.³⁴

Internal interactions or practices, by them, I mean interactions or practices that involve only members of the same culture that is, practices only conducted by members of an internal society.

External interactions or practices, by them, I mean interactions or practices that involve members of different cultures that is, practices which may be conducted by both member of an internal society and members of an external society.

An internal norm, by this, I mean a norm of a culture that applies only to the culture's internal interactions or practices, that is, internal norms are only valid for the alleged society. Their members act morally with reference to internal norms.

An external norm, by this, I mean a norm of a culture that applies to the culture's external interactions or practices, that is, external norms may be valid for every society regardless of their internal norms.

In the first section we have seen the difference between mores and morals can be considered. Mores are harmless traditions and actions which may be differentiated from one culture to another, and it is not flaw to evaluate mores in accordance with internal norms. Morals are practices and treatment of people to each other, then there may appear the second way out.

Thus, there may not seem problematic to mention that internal norms can apply to mores which are valid only as internal practices and to also mention that external norms may reasonably apply to morals which are as external practices and interactions which can be accepted at least minimally by members of all societies.

It seems to morally and logically right to assert that there could be universally acknowledged external norms on which any culture bases at least in order to find out a way out in the light of minimal human rights.

³⁴ William J. Talbott, <http://faculty.washington.edu/wtalbott/phil338/trrelative.htm>

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