Moral Diversity as an Argument for Moral Relativism

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At some point long ago, people first became aware of moral diversity. They discovered that members of different cultures often have very different beliefs about right and wrong and often act quite differently on their beliefs. This discovery of differences soon suggested to some thinkers that there can be no single absolute truth about morality and that what is right or wrong must always be what is right or wrong in relation to one morality or another.

Other thinkers, anti-relativists, have always replied that moral diversity is not proof of moral relativism. Some customs are simply wrong. Where there are legitimate differences in custom, there are always differences in circumstance. Indeed, differences in custom are themselves differences in circumstance that can effect what is right or wrong without entailing moral relativism. You do not need to be a moral relativist to recognize that in England it is wrong to drive on the right, whereas in France it is not wrong to drive on the right. And as far as differences in moral opinion are concerned, they no more establish moral relativism than differences in opinion as I write this paper about whether fusion has occurred in a jar in Utah establish "fusion relativism."

But this reply misses the point. Moral relativists do not argue that moral relativism follows from moral diversity. Rather, they argue, moral relativism is (part of) the most plausible explanation of the range of moral diversity that actually exists.

In fact there are two related kinds of moral diversity—diversity in moral opinion and diversity in moral actions. In what follows, I will argue that these moral diversities provide some support for two related forms of moral relativism, a relativism of values and a relativism of reasons.

I will start by being more specific about moral relativism and by comparing moral relativism with other sorts of relativism: the uncontroversial way in which something can be "good for" one person and not another, relativistic physics, and relative adjectives.
like "tall." I will indicate the conditions under which relativism is a plausible hypothesis and I will argue that these conditions are met in morality.

Then I will discuss some complications. One is that moral differences involve difference in attitude, which can lead to a kind of "moral bargaining." I will note a special sort of relativism about the moral reasons a person can have to act in one or another way. Finally, I will suggest that there are at least two kinds of moral relativity, which might be called "agent relativity" and "critic relativity."

1. Uncontroversial Evaluative Relativity

Suppose Tom has bet on a horse that runs well in the rain and Sue has bet on a horse that does not run well in the rain, then rain is good for Tom and bad for Sue. This is an uncontroversial example of evaluative relativity. The rain is good in relation to Tom's goals and bad in relation to Sue's.

In talking about this, you do not have to always spell out the relation explicitly. If Max has bet on the same horse as Sue, he can simply say, "This rain is bad," meaning that it is bad for the two of them.

In saying "This rain is bad," he means (roughly) that it is bad for himself and his audience; not just that it is bad for himself. When you speak to others, the remark, "This rain is bad" is not normally equivalent to "This rain is bad for me." If you tell someone else that something that has happened is bad (or good), you mean (roughly) that it is bad (or good) in relation to certain goals, purposes, aims, or values that you take yourself to share with your audience.

If Mary knows that Tom has bet on a horse that runs well in the rain and she has bet on a horse that does not run well in the rain, it would normally be incorrect for her to tell Tom, simply, "This rain is bad." Such a remark would be overly self-centered. In the absence of some more or less clearly indicated qualification, evaluative remarks are understood from a point of view that is presumed to be shared by speaker and audience. If you are only talking about yourself, you should make that explicit and say "This rain is bad for me."

The rain can be bad for a group of people without being bad for each of them taken individually. It
might be bad for them taken collectively. If the other school's football team plays better in the rain, "This rain is bad" might mean "This rain is bad for our side."

However, we cannot simply equate the implicitly relative remark, "This rain is bad," with the explicitly relative remark, "This rain is bad for us." To see this, consider a situation in which Mary has bet on a horse that does not run well in the rain and she thinks, incorrectly, that Tom has also bet on that horse.

Suppose Tom has bet on the horse that runs well in the rain, but Mary does not realize this. If in this context she says to Tom, "This rain is bad for us," then it is clear how to evaluate her remark. What she says is simply false, since it is not the case that the rain is bad for the two of them. But if instead she were to say to Tom, "This rain is bad," then it is far from clear that what she says is false. Her remark to Tom presupposes shared interests or outlook. If that presupposition is incorrect, we do not normally try to assign truth or falsity to her remark. So in certain circumstances there is a difference between "This rain is bad" and "This rain is bad for us."

2. Moral relativism

Whether something is good or bad can be relative to a person or group of people; something may be good for some people, bad for others, indifferent to yet others. Moral relativism says that the same is true of moral values and moral norms. According to moral relativism, whether something is morally good, right, or just is always relative to a set of moral standards, a certain moral point of view.

Moral relativism holds that there are various moral outlooks with different standards of right and wrong. These moral outlooks may differ with respect to the relative weight given to liberty versus equality, or to general welfare versus the development of art and science. They can also differ with respect to the extent of the moral community: some people restrict the moral community to family and friends; others would include all people of a certain race or caste or country; some would include all people of whatever race or class; others would also count animals and
even plants as part of the moral community to be protected by the moral rules.

Moral relativism denies that one of these moral frameworks can be singled out as the true morality.

Moral relativism is not a claim about meaning. It does not say that speakers always intend their moral judgments to be relational in this respect. Clearly, moral absolutists do not intend their moral judgments to be interpreted as relational judgments of this sort. Moral relativism is not a thesis about every speaker’s intentions, it is a thesis about how things are, or, rather about how things aren’t! Moral relativism claims that there is no such thing as absolute good, absolute right, or absolute justice. There is only what is good, right, or just in relation to this or that moral framework.

We can compare moral relativism with Einstein’s theory of relativity in physics. According to Einstein’s theory, physical magnitudes, like mass, length, or temporal duration, are relative to a frame of reference. Two events can be simultaneous with respect to one frame of reference and not simultaneous with respect to another. In saying this, Einstein’s theory does not make a claim about speakers’ intentions. It does not claim that speakers intend to be making relational judgments when they speak of mass or simultaneity. The claim is, rather, that there is no such thing as absolute simultaneity or absolute mass. There is only simultaneity or mass with respect to one or another frame of reference. What someone might take to be absolute magnitudes are really relative magnitudes: magnitudes that are relative to that person’s frame of reference.

Imagine a difference of opinion about whether an event E precedes another F. According to Einstein’s theory of relativity, there may be no answer to this question: in relation to one framework E precedes F while in relation to a different framework E does not precede F.

Similarly, consider a moral disagreement about whether we are right to treat animals as we do, raising them for food, for example. Moral relativism holds that there may be no answer to this question: in relation to one moral framework it may be permissible to raise animals for food and in relation to a different moral framework it may not be permissible to raise
animals for food. What someone takes to be absolute
righness would then only be rightness in relation to
that person's moral framework.

Moral relativism does not claim that moral differ-
ences by themselves entail moral relativism, any more
than Einstein claimed that differences in opinion
about simultaneity by themselves entailed relativistic
physics. We have to consider what differences there
are or could be and why this might be so. How are we
to explain the sorts of moral differences that actual-
ly occur? Can we seriously suppose that there is an
answer to the question about the justice of our treat-
ment of animals that is independent of one or another
moral framework? What is the best explanation of
differences in this and other areas of seeming intrac-
tability?

Here I should emphasize that moral relativism does
not identify what is right in relation to a given
moral framework with whatever is taken to be right by
those who accept that framework. That would be like
saying Einstein's theory of relativity treats two
events as simultaneous with respect to a given coordi-
nate system if people at rest with respect to the
coordinate system believe the events are simultaneous.

Moral relativism does not offer an analysis of
rightness in terms of what people take to be right, nor
does moral relativism per se offer an analysis of
rightness in any other terms. Moral relativism is no
more committed to providing an analysis of rightness
than moral absolutism is. Some defenders of moral
absolutism take rightness to be unanalyzable. Defend-
ers of moral relativism can also take rightness to be
unanalyzable. Just because something is a relation
does not make it analyzable.

Some defenders of moral relativism do offer an
analysis of rightness just as some defenders of moral
absolutism offer an analysis of rightness. For exam-
ple, there are absolutist and relativist ideal observ-
er theories. A relativistic theory of this sort
says, roughly, that an act is right in relation to a
given moral framework if it would be favoured by
impartial spectators who began by accepting that
framework and who came to know and appreciate all the
relevant facts. Notice that in such a theory acts
might be wrong with respect to a given moral framework
even though they were approved of by those who accept-
ed that framework, since increased knowledge and appreciation of the facts can lead people who initially accepted the framework to change their attitudes.

But I hope this reference to a relativistic ideal observer analysis is not misleading. Just by itself moral relativism is not committed to that or any other analysis of rightness.

It makes sense to appeal to relativism under the following conditions. We envision certain differences of opinion about the application of an absolute notion like absolute simultaneity or absolute goodness, differences that we cannot see how to resolve. We can see how these differences might arise because of the differing salience of certain relations. Simultaneity with respect to one’s own reference frame might be much more salient than simultaneity with respect to another. Goodness with respect to one’s own moral framework might be much more salient than goodness with respect to a different moral framework. This suggests that it may be an illusion that an absolute notion of goodness or simultaneity has any application, an illusion that arises through confusing the absolute notion with a salient instance of the relative notion.

There is no question of demonstrative proof in an issue of this sort. Consider whether Senator Bradley of New Jersey is tall. Bradley was previously a professional basketball player. Carl, who thinks of Bradley in relation to other members of his old basketball team denies that Bradley is tall. Dora who instead thinks of Bradley in relation to other United States Senators asserts that Bradley is tall. Carl and Dora differ as to whether Bradley is tall. But neither is mistaken. Bradley is tall for a senator and not tall for a professional basketball player. Tallness is a relative matter. Although I see no demonstrative proof of the relativity of tallness, to accept this relativity is much more plausible than supposing that there has to be a real difference between Carl and Dora such that at least one of them must be mistaken.

Similarly consider moral disagreements over the proper treatment of animals, disagreements over abortion, and disagreements over the relative value of equality and liberty. Moral relativism offers an explanation of why such differences of moral opinion
are often so intractable: they are intractable be-
cause there is no more a fact of the matter in these
disputes than there is a fact of the matter as to
whether widely separated events are simultaneous or as
to whether Bradley is tall. To be sure, there are
alternative explanations of the seeming intractability
of these moral differences, for example, the sheer
difficulty of the issues involved, the possibility
that some people are ignoring relevant data or failing
to appreciate certain arguments. But to point to other
possible explanations does not rule out the relativis-
tic explanation. Each person has to decide for him-
self how plausible he takes these competing explana-
tions to be.

3. Human nature

Suppose that an absolutist ideal observer theory is
correct and that all normal people who are fully and
vividly informed of all the relevant facts will ap-
prove the same actions, no matter what initial moral
frameworks they accept. This might simply be a genet-
ic fact about people, given human nature as it has
resulted from evolution. In that case, we could
imagine people with a different genetic "nature" who
in certain cases would approve of different actions
even when they were vividly aware of all the relevant
facts.

Would that be a kind of moral relativism? This is
a purely terminological question of no substantive
interest. There would be a relativity to human nature
but no further moral relativity.

A view of this sort, seeing relativity to human
nature but nothing beyond that, has some plausibility
for normative epistemology. What counts as good
evidence or good reasons in ordinary real life situ-
ations may be fixed by a common human nature that has
resulted from evolution. (The genes of people with
inferior standards of evidence may simply lose out in
the evolutionary battle for survival.) Given your
beliefs, your innate procedures for evaluating evi-
dence may determine what further things you have
reason to believe. We can imagine that there are
people with different procedures who would not have
reasons to modify their views in the way we do; if so,
evidence would be relative to human nature but not to

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anything more.

For myself, I am inclined to accept a strong form of moral relativism and only a weak form of evidential relativism. In my view, what is right or wrong is not just relative to human nature, it also varies with particular moral frameworks; but what counts as evidence depends only on innate mechanisms that are part of human nature. But in this paper I will not say anything more about evidential relativism.

4. Differences in attitude

Some people say that it is a bad strategy to take moral relativism seriously. They say we should always assume that our moral differences can be resolved by reviewing the evidence, gathering more evidence, and considering what conclusion is best supported by this evidence; otherwise, we may miss an opportunity to resolve our disputes. They say that, having decided a dispute is not rationally resolvable in this way, we will stop trying to resolve it, and, if we are wrong and the dispute could have been rationally resolvable, e.g. through the consideration of more evidence, we will have missed an opportunity to resolve it.

But this line of thought overlooks the cost of wrongly thinking a dispute is rationally resolvable when it is not rationally resolvable. The suggested policy can lead to pointless argument and, as I will explain in a moment, it also can lead one to overlook other reasonable ways to resolve moral disputes, ways that go beyond trying to reach conclusions on the basis of the evidence.

To accept a moral framework is to have certain values and principles, along with various feelings and emotions. A vegetarian wants to get people to stop raising animals for food. The anti-abortionist wants to get others to end the practice of abortion. These desires will survive a decision that moral relativism applies to these cases. That is to say: moral differences often involve practical differences that are resolved only if agreement is reached on what to do.

There can be conflicts in attitude that are not conflicts in belief. Suppose the reds and the greens are two competing football teams, Alice favors the reds and Bertie favors the greens. What's good for Alice's side is not what's good for Bertie's and they
can agree about that. When Alice says to herself or her teammates, "This rain is bad" (because the reds do not play well in the rain), and Bertie says to himself or his teammates, "This rain is good" (because the greens do play well in the rain), they are not contradicting each other but there is still a clash of attitudes. Bertie is expressing a favorable attitude toward the rain and Alice is expressing an unfavorable attitude toward the rain.

Similar differences in attitude may occur when people occupy different moral framework. Whereas Alice does not try to convert Bertie to her side, vegetarians will try to get others to become vegetarians in order to advance vegetarian goals.

A related type of difference in attitude occurs in bargaining. Consider labor-management negotiations. Labor wants a higher wage rate, management wants a lower rate. This difference is resolved when an agreement is reached at what the rate should be. The parties to the bargaining then come to accept a practical arrangement: they will adhere to a certain set of principles relating work and pay.

When people bargain about a wage rate or about the price of a house, they do not just try to show that a certain outcome is the one best supported by the evidence, given acceptable general principles. They also make and accept various proposals and the outcome is influenced by the bargaining power of the participants.

Moral disputes can also often involve a kind of bargaining. We can argue with others, not only by showing how features of their moral frameworks should lead them in certain directions in the light of the facts; we can also give them other reasons to modify their moral understandings. "If you don't do this, we won't do that." For example, disadvantaged groups can threaten to withhold participation in a moral framework unless their disadvantage is lessened or removed. Since animals cannot bargain in this way, most people are less likely to change their views about the treatment of animals than their views about racial or sexual discrimination.

This complicates the question whether we ought to assume moral disputes are always rationally resolvable. It depends on what counts as a "rational resolution" of a moral dispute. If moral bargaining is
included, then it may be useful to assume (until proven otherwise) that a moral dispute is rationally resolvable.

Disagreement can persist even between moral relativists who agree about what is right or wrong with respect to each others' moral frameworks. This fact is no objection to moral relativism, since relativism predicts this sort of persistence: The difference that remains is a difference in attitude that may be resolvable through bargaining even if it cannot be resolved simply by collecting evidence and pointing to mutually acceptable general principles.

Certainly, the persistence of such disagreement beyond the acceptance of relativism is no defense of absolutism, since it provides no reply to the moral relativist's case for doubting the existence of absolute goodness or rightness. The case against moral absolutism depends on a judgment about the best explanation of the seeming intractability of certain moral issues. This case has to be addressed on its own terms. It is not overturned by the fact that disagreement persists in the face of the acceptance of relativism.

5. Emotivism

There remains a possible challenge to moral relativism on the side opposite to absolutism--a challenge from emotivism. Emotivism says that moral judgments are better treated as expressions of attitude than as cognitive claims about certain relations. The relevant attitudes have an important noncognitive or emotional aspect. Believing that it is wrong to raise animals for food is to be opposed to raising animals for food, for example, and may include being unhappy that animals are raised for food.

The issue is a delicate one, since emotivists and moral relativists agree about many things. They agree first of all in rejecting moral absolutism. They agree that where absolutists see moral absolutes, there are in fact only relations between moral frameworks and possible courses of action or situations. They also agree that the primary use of moral judgments is in relation to a moral framework that the speaker accepts so that such judgments will therefore express a speaker's attitudes. How then do they
differ?

Some would say they differ about the meaning of moral judgments: the emotivist says that the meaning of a moral judgment is determined by its use to express a certain moral attitude; the moral relativist says that the meaning of a moral judgment is determined by its use to indicate that a certain relation holds between a moral framework and a possible action or state of affairs.

But, as I have emphasized, moral relativism is not a claim about the meaning of ordinary moral judgments, just as Einstein's theory of relativity is not a claim about what people ordinarily means by "mass" or "simultaneous".

It might be thought that there is an issue about how people who reject moral absolutism should use moral language. Should they use moral language to make relational judgments of right or wrong that are true or false with respect to the relevant moral framework? Or should they use moral language in a noncognitive way, to express noncognitive attitudes, to prescribe one or another course of action, or whatever.

I find this to be a hard issue to take seriously. If it is possible to do either of these things, then speakers can do either or both.

There is no question that they can use moral language in the first way to make cognitive claims about what is right or wrong with respect to one or another moral framework. In that case, it would be natural to use moral language in much the way we now talk about relative good or bad. In speaking of moral goodness, rightness, or justice in relation to a moral framework that a speaker presupposes he shares with his audience, there would normally be no need to make explicit the relativity to that framework. In other cases, the speaker would have to indicate the relevant framework explicitly.

Moral judgments in which the framework was not explicitly mentioned would express moral attitudes, in the sense that they would presuppose the acceptance of that framework by the speaker.

It is less clear what it would be to use moral language in the way suggested by emotivism simply to express noncognitive attitudes, so that "That is morally wrong" would be similar in meaning to "Boo to
There are familiar issues here about moral predicates appearing in dependent clauses. For example, consider the remark, "It is wrong to encourage someone to do the wrong thing." How is the second occurrence of "wrong" to be handled?

It might be objected that moral relativists have no way to express their differences if these are not based on shared values and that this shows a nonrelativistic moral terminology is needed. But consider two people who are bargaining over the price of a house. They can certainly express their difference as a difference over "what the price of the house is to be," which is not to say that it is a difference over what the price of the house ought to be. Similarly, moral relativists who differ over abortion can engage in moral bargaining over what the rules concerning abortion are to be without supposing that they are bargaining over what the rules morally ought to be in some nonrelativistic sense of "morally ought."

6. Judgments about moral reasons

A spectator can evaluate an agent who has different values from those of the spectator. The spectator may or may not have to take the agent's values into account, depending on the sort of moral judgment he makes of the agent. An interesting issue arises for moral judgments that attribute reasons to an agent. For example, the judgment, "Albert ought morally to help out with the picnic," would normally be used to say that Albert has moral reasons to help out with the picnic. Other moral judgments do not attribute reasons to the agents mentioned. For example, the judgment "it is terrible that the tiger attacked the children at the zoo," would not normally be used to say either that the tiger had moral reasons to refrain from attacking the children or that the children had moral reasons to refrain from being attacked. The judgment says that it was bad that the tiger attacked the children, not that it was bad of the tiger to have attacked the children, or bad of the children to have been attacked.

People can make judgments about people that resemble this sort of judgment about the tiger. Suppose Mabel takes Hitler's actions to be a great evil and
also believes that Hitler's values were sufficiently perverse that they provided Hitler with no reason to refrain from acting as he acted. Mabel may then view Hitler as in some ways similar to the tiger. Although she judges Hitler to be a great evil, she may find that she is no more able to judge that it was wrong of Hitler to have acted as he acted than to judge that it was wrong of the tiger to have attacked the children.

The analogy between the case of Hitler and the case of the tiger is not perfect. It may be more appropriate for Mabel to think of Hitler as an enemy. She will judge that Hitler's actions are terrible in relation to her side even if these same actions are not terrible in relation to the other side with its Nazi outlook, just as Alice views rain as bad for her team even if it is good for Bertie's team. Mabel can think that we need to destroy Hitler, our enemy, while believing that Hitler may be justified in relation to his own framework.

I do not claim that Mabel's view of Hitler is required or even that it is very plausible, only that it is intelligible. It may very well be a false view of Hitler. It may be that Hitler had sufficient reasons not to have ordered the extermination of the Jews. Such reasons might have derived from Hitler's own moral principles. Or there may be principles that would give sufficient reasons to any rational person not to have proceeded as Hitler proceeded no matter what that person's values and standards.

But suppose for the sake of argument that Hitler's moral outlook did not require him to respect all people and did not give him reasons to refrain from ordering the extermination of the Jews. Finally, suppose for the sake of argument that Hitler did not have a sufficient reason from any source to refrain and, indeed, had a sufficient reason to proceed with his evil plans. Then any moral judgment that implied that Hitler did have a sufficient reason to refrain could not be true. (If P is not true and Q implies P then Q is not true.) So, the claim that Hitler ought morally not to have ordered the extermination of the Jews would not be true, if in fact Hitler did not have sufficient reason to refrain and if the claim that Hitler ought morally not to have ordered the extermination of the Jews implies that Hitler had sufficient reasons to refrain.
Let us look at this more closely. We can distinguish two issues. First, to what extent are there people who do not have sufficient reasons to observe the moral principles that we have sufficient reason to observe? Second, do certain moral judgments imply that an agent has sufficient reasons to act in a certain way?

7. Relativity about moral reasons

Consider fairly fundamental principles of our morality, such as rules against stealing and killing. It seems relatively easy to think of actual people who do not observe these rules who seem otherwise rational and well informed. Such people include successful criminals who do not care about people in general, who nevertheless lead enjoyable lives, and who are able successfully to escape punishment for violations of the principle that one should not kill other people. There are also politicians mainly interested in political power at any cost. There are people with odd moral views, who for example take cats to have supreme moral value. There are so-called sociopaths and simple egoists who are interested only in themselves.

It is easy to think of such people who are not motivated to observe our moral requirements, where this is not because of ignorance on their part, of any failure to reason correctly, of weakness of will, or of any other sort of failure to appreciate reasons to observe the requirement in question. It is difficult to see how such people could nevertheless have sufficient reasons to observe the moral requirements. True, there are philosophical arguments purporting to show that there are reasons for such a person to observe one or another moral requirement, but these arguments do not seem compelling. It is hard to see what mistake the people mentioned would make in rejecting these arguments with a smile.

Considerations of particular cases suggests that what moral requirements a person has sufficient reasons to follow will depend on that person's principles and values. This conclusion is further confirmed by one natural account of reasons and reasoning. A person's reasons are determined by what reasoning is available to the person or would be available if the person had more information or had certain obstacles.
to good reasoning removed. Furthermore, practical reasoning, like other reasoning, is a kind of change in view. What conclusions are supported by practical reasoning depends on where one starts, that is it depends on one's initial desires, goals, intentions, beliefs, and values. If people have different enough starting positions with respect to their desires, goals, intentions, and values, then they will be subject to different practical reasons even given the facts as they really are. 8

This is not merely to argue for relativism about reasons from a speculative theory of practical reasoning. 9 Relativism about reasons can also be defended through consideration of particular cases. True, a difference theory of practical reasoning like Gewirth’s or Nagel’s 10 would conflict with moral relativism, so it is necessary to consider those theories to see whether one of them is more plausible than the alternative view which supposes that one’s moral reasons depend on what moral framework one accepts. 11

8. "Ought" and reasons

Let us now turn to the question whether certain moral judgments imply that an agent has sufficient reasons to act in a certain way. Consider the following remark: "Albert ought morally to help out at the party, although he does not have sufficient reasons to help out at the party." In any ordinary circumstance, this remark would be quite odd, indeed inconsistent. So, there is some reason to think that there is the implication in question. "A ought morally to D" does seem to imply "A has sufficient reasons to D."

It has been objected that accepting the implication requires rejecting a traditional philosophical question as resting on a misuse of language, namely, the question, "Do I have sufficient reasons to do what I ought morally to do." 12 But this objection is inconclusive. It may be that this philosophical question uses the phrase "morally ought" in a way that is parasitic on a more ordinary usage in which "ought morally" implies "has sufficient reasons."

Suppose that question is asked in another language and it is unclear whether the words "murph globic" are to be translated as "Ought morally". He says, as it were, "Do I have sufficient reasons to do what I murph
globic to do." The spectator and others in that society think that a person "murph globic" to do something in roughly the same circumstances in which we think that a person ought morally to do it. But no one in the spectator's society thinks that a person has any reason to do what he "murph globic" to do. On the other hand, members of this other society do think that a person has a sufficient reason to do what he "gliph mornal" to do, and that what people value in this society is connected with what they think they gliph mornal to do in the way that what we value is connected with what we think we ought morally to do. Supposing that we continue this story sufficiently far, it might become clear that our "ought morally" is a better translation for their "gliph mornal" than for their "murph globic." It may make sense to translate, "Do I have sufficient reasons to do what I murph globic to do?" as "Do I have sufficient reasons to do what I ought morally to do?" only if there is a background in which people take "murph globic" to imply "has sufficient reasons."13

Of course, people can use language in whatever way they want. If someone wants to use the words "morally ought" both nonparasitically and in such a way that there is no implication from "Jones ought morally not to kill Ortcutt" to "Jones has sufficient reasons to refrain from killing Ortcutt," then fine. We may need to await some further indication of how these words are being used, but how can we object to someone's using words however he likes? This purely linguistic decision cannot affect any of the substantive issues of moral philosophy, as far as I can see. For example, no matter how one chooses to use the phrase "morally ought," there is still the issue whether certain demands are such that everyone has sufficient reasons to follow them.

9. Critic Relativity and Agent Relativity

We have now considered two different, if related, kinds of moral relativity. First, there is the claim that what is morally good, right, or just is always relative to a moral framework. Second, there is the claim that the moral reasons an agent has depend upon the agent's desires, goals, aims, intentions, and values and, in particular, that there is enough varia-
tion so that an agent may fail to have sufficient reasons to act on principles that a given critic endorses.

Judgments of moral relativists who accept both claims will be subject to two sorts of linguistic relativity. First, consider moral judgments in which there is no explicit indication of the relevant moral framework. Ordinarily, these judgments will be made in relation to a framework that is presupposed to be shared between the critic and his audience. Such judgments illustrate critic relativity: there is a relativity to the critic's values.

Second, consider moral judgments like, "A ought morally to D," or, "It would be wrong of C to G," which imply that an agent has sufficient reasons to do something. These judgments illustrate agent relativity: there is a relativity to the agent's values.

If critic and agent accept sufficiently different moral frameworks, the critic can only make certain sorts of judgments about the agent. The critic can express certain evaluations of the agent in relation to the critic's moral framework, like "Hitler was a great evil." And the critic can make reason implying judgments in relation to the agent's morality, "Hitler was doing the morally right thing for a Nazi to do." But the critic cannot make reason implying judgments in relation to his (the critic's) morality. The critic will not be able to say, for example, "It was morally wrong of Hitler to have acted in that way," if the critic is a moral relativist who supposes that Hitler did not have a sufficient reason to refrain from acting as he did.

In judging other people, should you judge them in the light of your values or in the light of their values? It depends on what you say about them. If you are simply evaluating them, your own values are relevant. If you imply something about their moral reasons, then their values are relevant too. If you do not accept the moral framework in relation to which you are speaking, then you should make explicit what that framework is.

10. Conclusion

Let me summarize. I began with an uncontroversial case of evaluative relativism: something being good
for one person and not for another. Moral relativism holds that the same is true for moral goodness, rightness, and justice. Things are morally good, right, and just only in relation to one or another moral framework. This relativity provides the best explanation of certain seemingly intractable moral disputes.

To accept a moral framework is to accept certain rules, principles, and values. One’s attitudes are involved. Moral differences will therefore include differences in attitude. Furthermore, moral argument can involve a kind of moral bargaining of a sort that has played a role in the change of attitudes about racial and sexual discrimination.

A complication arises for moral judgments that have implications concerning an agent’s reasons, since some agents may lack sufficient reasons to follow the rules of the critic’s morality. Saying that someone ought morally to do something normally implies that the person has sufficient reasons to do it. Given this use of "morally ought," it may not be the case that everyone ought morally to act in the ways favored by a particular framework, even if "ought morally" is understood in relation to that framework.
Endnotes

1. It is unclear whether this difference in how we use and react to these sentences indicates a difference in truth conditions.
2. I discuss this further with references in Gilbert Harman, "Moral agent and impartial spectator," The Lindley Lecture at the University of Kansas (1986), Lawrence Kansas.
9. Contrary to what Brink says, op. cit.
10. opera cit.
12. David Brink, op. cit.

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