

"Normality is culturally defined¹," and therefore no person has the right to give a value judgement on the morals of others.

Normative statements are value judgements and they can be applied to many areas of study and everyday life. 'The federal reserve should lower the interest rate' is an economic normative ^{claim} term. It is a normative statement because it is given based on the speaker's opinion.

No; because it says what would be right.

When normative statements are in conjunction with morality it is a controversial topic because they involve moral value judgements, and for an individual to say what beliefs and actions are "good" and which are "bad". This develops into a debate between philosophers who try and explain where moral ^{beliefs?} come from, and whether some are, in fact, better than other. Evolutionary theorists defend a claim that traits and morals are selected through natural selection, theists say that these morals come from God, anti-realists believe that morals do not exist at all and then there are moral relativists. Normative Moral Relativism is the belief that no one person can judge the values of another because these values are simply subjective social constructs. Normative Moral Relativism is, not only a valid theory, of normativity in morals but one of most functional because of the theory of value laden and because there is no better alternative argument for the array of values that are seen throughout the world.

is allowed to?
(This itself looks like a normative claim.)

the theory-laden-ness of observation?

Ruth Benedict, a leading U.S anthropologist, examined different cultures around the world. She focussed on their traditions and values and found that in each culture it was different. One tribe, for example, on the island of northwest Melanesia had a general moral system where they believed that everyone other person on the island was their enemy. This belief was so pertinent that even when they had a good harvest the Dobu believed that this meant that someone had stolen from them. Because people in this tribe could not trust another soul, "their preoccupation with poisoning was constant,²" and by law, they were not allowed to share seed, even with other family members. On the other hand people living with "Christian values" are taught to love their fellow man, to forgive and to be compassionate. These two groups of people have different morals and cultures because their moral codes work in their societies. These two groups, clearly, live in different moral universes, "A moral universe consists of a system of common sense

¹ Benedict, Ruth. "In Defence of Moral Relativism." Introduction to Philosophy 3rd edition(2004): 485

² Benedict, Ruth. "In Defence of Moral Relativism." Introduction to Philosophy 3rd edition(2004): 486

(A) As Pojman points out, this is a moral claim, and hence (by your own lights) will be false in some cultures, true in others. (It's false in mine!)³

Morality.³ And these different universes prove to us that in fact, "morality is just the set of common rules, habits, and customs that have won social approval over time."⁴ And this is why the Dobu and Christians have completely different moral codes. The question is which code is "wrong" and which one is "right"?

The Definition of 'Normative Moral Relativism' is a belief "associated with an empirical thesis that there are deep and widespread moral disagreements and a metaethical thesis that the truth or justification of moral judgments is not absolute, but relative to some group of persons."⁵ According to this belief every culture and group of persons' has ^a different moral codes, and there is no way to say which ones are better than others. As William Graham Sumner says "we learn the [morals] as consciously as we learn to walk and hear and breathe, and we never know any reason why the morals are what they are."⁶ Therefore no ^{culture?} person can judge another. The reason for this is because every action that a person takes or the values which they hold come from their upbringing and the social morals of the community where he grew up. This theory is completely valid due to theory laden and because there is no better alternative.

^{not not determined}
The argument of theory-laden ^{view} says that "our perceptual experiences in a given situation are influenced by the concepts, beliefs, expectations and, perhaps, even the hopes and desires, which we bring to the situation"⁷ This means that our senses; taste, touch, smell and hearing are unique to us. No two people will ever experience the taste of a sandwich in the exact same way. And therefore it is impossible for us to see something ^{actually} objectively. Everything that we experience affects us as a person, and the effect that this experience leaves on us affects the way that we judge later events. This means that when a Christian person analyzes Sharia law no matter how hard they try to be impartial, their Christian values and beliefs will affect ^{to some extent} what they judge as "right" and "wrong." This shows, as moral relativism illustrates, that no person can make a warranted? normative statement about the values and morals of others.

→ Is this normative statement warranted?

³ Trannsjo, Torbjorn. "Moral Relativism." Philosophical Studies 135(2007): 123-143

⁴ Pojman, Louis P. "Ethical Relativism versus Ethical Objectivism." Introduction to Philosophy 3rd edition(2004): 491

⁵ Gowans, Chris. "Moral Relativism." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2004. 4 April 2008 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>>

⁶ Pojman, Louis P. "Ethical Relativism versus Ethical Objectivism." Introduction to Philosophy 3rd edition(2004): 491

⁷ Swoyer, Chris. "Relativism." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2003. Stanford. 5 Apr 2008 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/>>

The theory-ladenness of observation.

This is recognised in science, for example, but is seen as rather limited. Two scientists in different paradigms see largely the same data.

It's almost universally rejected, in fact.

The belief of normative moral relativism is the best explanation of values also, because of lack of a better explanation. The world we live in has thousands of cultures and all have different beliefs. Even a basic belief such as: "killing another person is wrong" is not universal. An example of this is right here in the biggest superpower in the world, a democratic state, the USA, where the death penalty is legal in 37 states. Not only do so many different moral codes exist but philosophers have tried to establish a method of finding what action are just/"good" and those which was unjust/"bad." Aristotle suggested using a method of virtue, where "good" actions were virtuous ones. Kant suggested that using the categorical imperative one would find true morals. This was when an action was done with the correct maxim. And Mills suggested that a just/"good" action is one in which more pleasure, as opposed to pain, is brought to a community. Once again there is no universality as to which philosopher's theory should be followed, and there is no way to prove that one of these absolutist views is better or "right" than another, which is "wrong." There is no better way to explain all these different morals and methods of creating morals than by using moral relativism. But still, many philosophers disagree with the theory.

Anti-realists believe that moral truths do not exist. ^{One} Their argument is that if there are such things as moral truths, then they should be ^{? accessible?} as important and justifiable as scientific truths. In order, therefore, for a moral truth to exist there should be universal agreement. ^{We see} Seeing that this universality does not exist, ^{as beliefs} moral truths differ around the world. They conclude, therefore, that moral truths do not exist. ^{is evidence} And they do not believe that one can make a normative statement about these nonexistent codes and would say that the difference in the Dobu and the group of Christians ^{is evidence} proves that morals do not exist. Yet, this seems too farfetched because if there were no ^{moral truths?} morals then not as many people that follow these codes (even if they are not found in legal documents) would exist either.

Moral relativists are not anti-realists about moral, they believe that morals exist but they are anti-realists about "normal." To an anti-realist there is no such thing as ^{truth} a "normal," normal is simply that which is accepted by all the people of a particular group or society. And would answer the question by saying that neither the Dobu nor the Christian doctrine is "better" than the other but rather that both moral codes are "convenient terms for socially approved habits,"⁸ which that society uses to grow and develop.

Benedict sees 'normal' and 'good' as practically synonymous

⁸ Pojman, Louis P. "Ethical Relativism versus Ethical Objectivism." Introduction to Philosophy 3rd edition(2004): 491

(B) As an example of an uncontroversial moral claim, philosophers usually take something like "It's wrong to torture innocent people for fun."

③ Theists can account for differences of moral opinion just as a result of ignorance.

Theists believe that all morals that we should follow are given by God. Only God can judge these morals and our action within or out of his moral code. This theory has two large flaws. Firstly: not every person believes in God. Does this mean that they do not have to follow the moral code? Should they follow it anyway because all theists should? And the second issue is that not all people believe in the same God, the bible, the torah and the Quran are all books of god, yet they differ in the value they teach and the actions in which their followers can take are different. This once again leads to different moral codes being followed in different areas that have different religions, a result that these theists cannot account for. (C)

NA according to theists, at least, so there's no reductio ad absurdum here.

Evolutionists would argue that because the Dobu culture is so concerned about others harming them and therefore do not share with one another means that eventually the tribe will die out. This will happen when there is a poor harvest of potatoes and only the corn grows all potato growers will die because they will have no food. On the other hand according to the Christian moral code "love thy neighbour" a person will always help those around them and in the event of a draught the farmers of corn will gladly share their harvest with the potato farmers and in this way the group will never die out. Therefore, according to the evolutionist the Christian doctrine is better than that of the Dobu. This evolutionary normativity works in theory but in reality the world is not so black and white.

Sharia Law is a code of moral conduct that is followed by religious Muslims. According to Sharia law there are three Hadd offenses, such as adultery committed by a woman, and "these crimes can be punished by specific penalties, such as stoning, lashes or the severing of a hand."⁹ The Muslim faith is one of the biggest in the world and has not been threatened of decreasing in size any time soon. This would mean an evolutionist would say that stoning a person is a "good" thing. This will lead to contradictions when applied to all the different cases in the world and therefore the evolutionary theory for moral normativity fails.

Perhaps, at least x permissible x crim.

We live in a multi-cultural world where people from different countries, tribes or regional areas, wear different clothes, speak different languages, celebrate different traditions and have different moral codes. The theory of normative moral relativism is that it is impossible for a person to make a normative statement about morals. The reason for this is because it is impossible for an individual to be non-bias and objective when judging a value, because all their past experiences

⁹ Steiner, Susan. "Sharia Law." Guardian Newspaper 20 August 2002 20 August 2002 5 April 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/aug/20/qanda.islam>>.

NA if these actions are merely permissible, rather than obligatory.

shade their clear view of the situation. Moral relativism is also the only theory that can explain the reason why there are so many different moral codes and theories throughout the world. The issue that needs further debate is what moral relativism's truth means for the human race. Do we simply allow stoning to happen in Nigeria? Do we not object to the gun laws and death penalty in the United States of America? A true relativist would reply by saying that "...we ought to respect other cultures, and allow them to solve moral problems as they see fit."¹⁰ We have to stop trying to change the different moral universes around us and rather accept them and try to get a better understanding of them.

I think you should at least acknowledge the apparent incoherence in making a counter-cultural moral statement that is supposedly a consequence of moral relativism. Pojman makes this criticism quite eloquently, so it needs to be addressed.

In general I'm rather disappointed by this essay, not because (despite my efforts) you endorse moral relativism, but because you fail to address the objections that Pojman and others have made. It's also unclear why you accept relativism and not anti-realism.

C+

¹⁰ Trannsjo, Torbjorn. "Moral Relativism." Philosophical Studies 135(2007): 123-143

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