SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION OF WESTERMARCK'S ETHICAL RELATIVITY

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SUMMARY  

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1.1 What is Ethical Relativity?

Ethical Relativity, sometimes called Ethical Relativism, is, as propounded by Westermarck, a meta-ethical theory according to which moral values have no objective validity. Commonly, it asserts that moral values are environmentally conditioned and that they vary from one culture to another and perhaps even within cultures. The ethical relativist holds, therefore, that moral values are contingent: they depend upon some factors or other such as culture and context. In consequence, he maintains that the unqualified question: 'whose moral values are 'right' or 'supreme'?', cannot be answered. For there are, on his view, no objective and universally applicable criteria with reference to which different systems of morals may be judged. It will emerge later that the question: 'whose moral values are right in this context?' may have meaning for the relativist.

This theory is to be contrasted with Ethical Absolutism according to which moral values are objective. That is, moral values 'have a real existence apart from any reference to a human mind, that what is said to be good or bad, right or wrong, cannot be reduced merely to what people think to be good or bad, right or wrong'; and that 'if a certain course of conduct is objectively right, it must be thought to

1 Some writers refer to the doctrine described here as 'ethical relativity', others refer to it as 'ethical relativism'. I shall regard both names as referring to the same doctrine and shall use whichever seems most appropriate. If, for instance, the author I am currently discussing uses one name, I shall, to avoid obscurity, use the same name.

2 Meta-Ethics are to be distinguished from normative ethics in that the latter are concerned with discovering acceptable principles of obligation and to determine what is morally right or wrong, good or bad; the former are concerned with the meaning of ethical terms and with the status of moral values. cf Ethics - W.K. Frankena p.78.

3 By moral values, I mean those values which impinge on the question 'What ought I to do?'

4 Ethical Relativity - Edward Westermarck p.3
be right by all rational beings who judge truly of the matter and cannot, without error, be judged to be wrong\(^1\). The ethical absolutist holds, therefore that moral values, far from being contingent, are necessary\(^2\) and, commonly, a priori\(^3\). According to the ethical absolutist there is one and only one moral system which is right and this system supplies the criteria (or is the standard) with reference to which all men should be judged regardless of their views to the contrary and of their beliefs and the moral systems which they themselves live by and accept. The moral values of his system, the ethical absolutist regards as having the status of absolutes. That is, they apply to all men in all ages and in all circumstances.

1.2 Why is Ethical Relativity Important?

The ethical absolutist may not be certain what his moral absolutes are but, convinced that they exist, may be seeking them. Socrates is an example of such a person. He is, however, a rarity. Ethical absolutists have usually held that their values are the only right ones and that all men should be judged by them. It is in this respect that the ethical absolutist is ethnocentric. If his values are the right ones, contrary ones are wrong. Frequently in the course of history this has been the cause of persecution, war, genocide and murder. For the absolutist has too often concluded that since his values were right it was his duty to either convert others to his way of life or remove the 'evil' which their contrary values embodied. Especially when allied with a religion has this been so. Throughout history, countless millions have been slain merely because they believed in a different God

\(^1\) ibid p.3

\(^2\) A 'necessary' truth is one which depends on no other truth, indeed on nothing whatever, being true in its own right.

\(^3\) A proposition is true 'a priori' if it is true by thinking and requires no observations to establish its truth. Thus a priori propositions are either self evident or can be derived from self evident truths.
(or Gods) or worshipped the same God (or Gods) in a different way. This intolerance of one religious group for another persists today and people are still being slain because of it.

The same is true of political ideologies. The existence of political propaganda pays tribute to the fact that not only do some people regard their political system as the right or supreme one but they think that other people with different political systems should adopt theirs. In the last thirty years the acceptance of communism by many countries especially in Middle and Eastern Europe and South East Asia has been a conscious policy of the founder members among communist countries. However, western democracies are not blameless. 'It is now widely accepted that many nineteenth century thinkers were rigid and dogmatic on moral questions. The ordinary righteous nineteenth century European or American was also often rigid. When he encountered people of other cultures, especially primitive cultures, he often did not make allowances for the differences between their habits and circumstances and his own. He often judged them as if they were Europeans or Americans. He assumed, that is, that the standards of his society were correct and fully applicable. By these standards the people of primitive cultures were inferior, and often had to be classified as reprobates.'

'The result in many cases was an intolerable excess of interference. Often viable traditional cultures were thoroughly disrupted. It goes without saying that members of these culture groups were not immediately transformed into Europeans or Americans. Quite often they sank into a way of life which was in many respects inferior to the life they led before the interference began' 1.

Now ethical absolutism has not by any means in all cases been directly responsible for the subjugation of one group or nation by another - for

1 Ethical Knowledge - J.J. Kupperman p.73
war, persecution and genocide. Frequently these have been the result of some other motive such as self interest. The profit motive was unquestionably the chief reason for the extensive colonisation and the consequent subjugation and conquest of many primitive peoples. Colonisation has been justified, however, by saying, for example, that it was necessary 'to civilize the natives' or 'to bring God to the heathen'. Thus ethical absolutism although not directly responsible has been used to justify such actions as colonisation and its concomitant atrocities. Nevertheless, many cases of religious persecution and religious war can be blamed directly upon ethical absolutism.

These are the reasons then why I think that it is important to decide which of ethical relativism and ethical absolutism is a correct account of moral values. The social consequences of ethical absolutism being accepted are disquieting. For all the atrocities which have been committed and are still being committed today in the name of one set of absolute values would be justified. If, on the other hand, some form of ethical relativism can be accepted then there is at least no rational justification for such events. This of course will not prevent their occurrence. It is important to notice that ethical relativism does not entail tolerance. For this would be deriving a value from a fact. What it does imply is that ethical absolutism is unacceptable, that therefore no moral system is right for all men and superior to other moral systems. No one, therefore, can claim that his actions are justifiable because his moral values (or moral standards) are right or superior.

This does not of course prevent the relativist from making statements like 'the Nazis were wrong to exterminate the Jews' or 'the Eskimos are wrong to kill their superannuated parents', for nothing in
ethical relativism need hinder him from adhering to a specific moral point of view. All that he is not entitled to do is to justify the interference in the lives of peoples with contrary moral values on the grounds that his values are right and theirs are wrong. This said, it must be pointed out that this is the standpoint of the extreme relativist. A relativist could hold that in his society or culture there are values which are right in that society (although not of course absolutely right) and that anyone in his society is bound by these. In practice we behave as if this were so. Each society has its laws and customs which are peculiar to it. He might, however, say that while one may interfere in the behaviour of members of one's own society, one may not with members of other societies. For, he may say, there is no justification for saying that his society's values are superior to those of others.

My intention in this essay is to describe the essential features of Westermarck's theory of ethical relativity, to state some criticisms of his theory and where possible to offer some defence against these. Finally, I shall try to expose some of the implications for education of this position. Before embarking on this enterprise, however, there are a few important questions which require to be answered. In the first place, who was Westermarck? Secondly, how are his ideas related to the rest of philosophy? That is, does he have any support from other philosophers? Finally, what other kinds of ethical relativity are there besides his account of it?

1.3 Who was Westermarck?

Edward Westermarck was born in Helsingfors in 1862 and he first came to this country in 1887 in order to collect the material in the library of the British Museum for his book on the history of marriage.
Scholarships awarded in 1893 and 1897 enabled him to return to work again at the British Museum and also at Oxford. In 1906 he published the first volume of 'The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas' and in 1907 he became a Professor of Sociology at the University of London. Soon after, he was appointed to the chair of moral philosophy at Helsingfors and the two posts were held by him concurrently. For a number of years he devoted two terms to his work at Helsingfors and the summer term to sociology at London. In 1932 he published 'Ethical Relativity', a condensed version of his book on the moral ideas, which contained, however, in addition, an answer to the critics of the first.

In his work, Westermarck had been influenced chiefly by the earlier work of Charles Darwin and Adam Smith. He thought, for example, that it was because of natural selection that instincts would be developed which impelled the male to remain with the female and her young, and to care for and protect them. The influence exerted upon him by Adam Smith was considerable. In his 'Theory of the Moral Sentiments' (1759), Smith had regarded the chief moral concepts as approval and disapproval and argued that these have been derived from the emotions of gratitude and resentment. As we shall see, Westermarck's theory incorporates these ideas.

1.4 Some other Relativists.

Ethical Relativity is a doctrine of great antiquity. Protagoras in the Platonic Dialogues propounds it as part of a more general theory of relativity often summarised by the statement 'Man is the measure of all things'. Having been savaged by Socratic dialectic, it fell out of favour for a time and remained without a champion while Europe lay in the grip of ecclesiastical dogmatism. Among the first to free himself from this was Thomas Hobbes whose ethico-political system took written shape during the crisis of 1640. 'From an ethical point of view', writes Sidgwick 'Hobbism divides itself naturally into two parts...... Its
theoretical basis is the principle of egoism, viz. that it is natural, and so reasonable, for each individual to aim solely at his own preservation or pleasure; while, for the practical determination of the particulars of duty it makes social morality entirely dependent on positive law and institution. It thus affirmed the relativity of good and evil in a double sense; — good and evil, for any individual citizen, may from one point of view be defined as the objects respectively of his desire and aversion; from another point of view, they may be said to be determined for him by his sovereign.  

David Hume, writing more than a century later, is also a relativist for he 'insisted that moral judgements were neither necessary and a priori, nor were they descriptions of any actual feature of the world'. He held that "'x is good' means the same as the statement 'x is such that the contemplation of it would call forth an emotion of approval towards it in all or most men". "On Hume's view", therefore, "if men did not feel these emotions nothing would be good or bad". That is, moral values depend on emotion. Moreover, that group of philosophers who have followed in Hume's wake are certainly not ethical absolutists. Thus Ayer, Stevenson and the other emotivists of the thirties are ethical relativists. As stated by Ayer, the emotivist view is that 'sentences which simply express moral judgements do not say anything. They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of truth and falsehood'. Evidently on this view, there is nothing objective or absolute about moral judgements and that these are contingent upon the character of the person making them.

1 History of Ethics — Sidgwick p.169
2 Ethics since 1900 — M. Warnock p.65
3 Five Types of Ethical Theory — C.D. Broad p.85
4 ibid p.86
5 Language, Truth and Logic p.108
6 Ayer does not, however, regard himself as a subjectivist.
Wittgenstein wrote remarkably little on the subject of ethics except for one lecture and a few remarks scattered among his various works. Nevertheless, on his view of language and meaning, he is clearly a relativist. He held that the meanings of words are to be found in the way they are used. If, therefore, moral words such as good, bad, etc., are used differently by different people or different groups or different societies it follows that Wittgenstein’s standpoint is relativistic. Thus if the diversity of moral judgements can be shown, and some evidence will be assembled later to this effect, ethical relativism follows directly from Wittgenstein’s criterion of meaning. But let him speak for himself. He says 'If you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics. In such a difficulty always ask yourself: how did we learn the meaning of this word ("good" for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings'. There is certainly none of the absolutist here. The word 'good' means many things and if we want to find out its meaning in ethics, say, we have to investigate the history of its usage by us in moral discourse. There is no suggestion that its meaning is fixed or universal or the same throughout the ages. Nor are we bound to use the word in some ways rather than others. It is just a fact that we have used it in some ways and not others; applied it to some actions and things and people and not others. And it is this past history which delimits the present meaning which we give it.

Of the current philosophers, Urmson and Hare seem to be relativists. Urmson admits that people can have different moral standards and that even if they have not, if they disagree, "when the ultimate disagreement has been revealed, namely a difference in what criteria are being used, then no moral arbitration between the parties is possible, nor, if

1 Philosophical Investigations, section 77 p.36e
they are honest will they be entitled to call each other's view bad or immoral.

Equally, for R.M. Hare, morality is a matter for the individual. To be moral is not to blindly follow some mystic formula but to make decisions of principle. Admittedly, Hare is categorical about a few of the properties possessed by principles: they are universalizable, etc. But what principles one is to utilize and in what priority, is a matter for the individual. Moral judgements are therefore relative to individual choice and it is implicit in the Language of Morals (in his account of how societies change in Chapter 4) that the standards by which choices are made vary from individual to individual and from age to age. At least not all, but some certainly of the standards.

Even if the same principles were involved in all ages it would still be up to the individual, according to Hare, to decide his personal priorities and it would, to that extent, be a subjective matter. However, it is inconceivable that all the moral principles which are applied by people in our society today came into being at the same time, in which case new principles do evolve or emerge. The principle that no man should be a slave to another, for example, is now well established in this country today. During the time of the slave trade when slavery was practised here it is doubtful if this principle was applied by very many people and even if it was, it was not certainly as universally applied then as it is today. The slave trade was not abolished until 1807 and even then people were still allowed to have slaves until 1833 when slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire. Until that time the plantations of our Colonies in South Africa and the West Indies were manned almost entirely by slaves.

1 Ethics since 1900 p.88
2 The Principle of Universalizability forbids us 'to make different moral judgements about actions which we admit to be exactly or relevantly similar' - Freedom and Reason p.33
'Slavery is wrong' is, therefore, an example of a principle which is of fairly recent origin. It has become widely accepted here only during the last hundred and fifty years. Thus even the principles upon which we base our moral decisions are not incorrigible but depend on the current conditions of life.

1.5 Why has Ethical Relativity a bad reputation?

The church is mostly to blame. 'Relativity' has carried the implication that alternative beliefs and religions and gods were just as acceptable, just as 'true' or as good. Given the fact that many religions (and those in our society are good examples) have consistently espoused their own values and beliefs, fostered the belief that theirs was the 'true' god and their way of life the right one and self-righteously set about conquering and converting others to their vision of truth - given this, it is not surprising that ethical relativity has been consistently condemned. For acceptance of ethical relativity makes conquest and conversion and self-righteousness, all in the name of God, indeed in any name, totally unjustified.

It has been argued that ethical relativity is a morally dangerous doctrine. Thus Rashdall has maintained that the emotive theory which leads to the denial of the objective validity of moral judgements "'is fatal to the deepest spiritual convictions and to the highest spiritual aspirations of the human race' and that it therefore is 'a matter of great practical as well as intellectual importance' that it should be rejected. 'To deny the validity of the idea of duty', he says, 'has a strong tendency to impair its practical influence on the individual's life'". It is, however, an over simplification to assert that ethical relativity leads to a denial of the validity of the idea of duty. For ethical relativity does not say that a person's idea of duty is not

1 Is Conscience an Emotion? Rashdall p.199 quoted from Ethical Relativity - Westermarck p.57
valid for him or that the idea of duty in a group or in a society is not valid for them. What it does assert is that it is not justifiable to say that (and thereby sensible to behave as if) one idea of duty or, for that matter, one system of values is superior to another. This has the happy consequence that there is no reason for intolerance merely on the basis of differences in values.

It is remarkable that relativistic philosophies have been accused by absolutists like Rashdall of causing bad results. As a cursory glance at history will show, war, strife, bloodshed and death are all too frequently the result of one nation or religious group attempting to impose its absolutevaluations upon another. 'Accept the true religion!' commanded the Moor, before striking off the head of the unrelenting heretic. This process has been repeated times without number before and since. It still happens in Ulster today. And the absolutist complains that relativism leads to bad results!

Yet the word 'relativity' carries nasty associations. Had Einstein's Theory of Relativity not been incomprehensible to all save a handful of men, it might have been rejected merely because it threatened some absolute principle or other (which it did). Fortunately, the mass of people who saw it for the first time in the New York Times in 1905 did not have the faintest idea of what it was about; and were able only to applaud its complexity. Men are most unwilling to admit that their cherished beliefs are matters of opinion or convention. 'We have here one of the deepest mysteries of life: that some men all of the time, and all men some of the time, have such a need of absolute conceptual foundations for their personal and social conduct that they

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1 It showed among other things that mass, length and time depend on velocity and are not therefore absolutes.

2 Einstein's Fifth Paper was printed on the Front Page of the New York Times just as he had written it.
cannot but believe - and seek to oblige other people to believe - that they have found them; and yet that such absolute conceptual foundations dissolve at the first touch of critical reflection. 

1.6 Varieties of Ethical Relativity

If moral values are relative and not absolute, to what are they relative? Theoretically they can be said to be relative to almost anything. Commonly, however, ethical relativity means one of three things: that moral value is relative to the person asserting it; or that moral value is relative to the type of society in which it is asserted; or that moral value is relative to the conditions in which it is asserted, i.e. what is right in some conditions may be wrong in others.

It has been said (by Morris Ginsberg and Richard Brandt, for example) that the third type of ethical relativity can be ignored since "if 'relativism' is used in this sense, then practically everyone is a relativist, for practically everyone believes that particular circumstances make a difference to the morality of an act - that, for instance, it is right to lie in some circumstances but wrong in others". This is difficult to accept. It is a feature of the absolutist that his absolute values are not contingent and that they apply to all men in all ages regardless of the conditions. The reader may begin to think that perhaps after all there are no absolutists. A moment's reflection, however, will convince him that many people believe that murder is always wrong, as is suicide or incest or homosexuality or adultery or contraception...... The point is that the circumstances of living so prevail upon the absolutist that he is compelled continually to undervalue some and overvalue others of his absolutes in particular situations. To do so is of course to behave for that moment as if the

1 Ideologies - Corbett p.203
2 'Ethical Theory', R.B. Brandt p.271
principle or absolute value which he is forced to reject is not absolute but this is precisely the kind of absurdity which is entailed by absolutism. Brand's example of the kind of thing that 'practically everyone believes' is, therefore, fortuitous: many people do believe that some actions are always wrong.

Moreover, if differences in moral judgements are wholly or partly the result of differences in the conditions of life, then these must never be forgotten when we try to evaluate the moral judgements of others whose circumstances are different from our own. One of the causes of ethnocentric behaviour is that it is unconsidered, thoughtless and often involves a misrepresentation of the facts. By some of those who are prejudiced against the negro, for instance, it is believed that the negro is innately inferior to the white man: that he is innately less intelligent, less responsible and even that he has an unpleasant smell. Yet this has not been conclusively demonstrated. It may be the case that he is apparently inferior but if so this may be the result of sociological factors. Only by taking all the facts and circumstances into account and by careful reflection, can ethnocentrism and its terrible consequences for mankind be overcome.

The widespread condemnation by the British of South African whites, because of the policy of apartheid which they maintain, is a glaring example. We ourselves in this respect are ethnocentric! Our condemnation is frequently made without any but a superficial knowledge of the conditions in South Africa, of its history, or of the difficulties experienced by both sides when a civilized people live alongside an emergent savage people. Frankly, I deplore apartheid but that I do so may be due as much to my ignorance of the facts and circumstances and of the reasons which lie behind it, as to the fact that I am
'culture blind': my values, the result of a different upbringing, are not the values of a white South African. If that were not enough, these same values of mine are continually being influenced by a veritable mass of propaganda directed against South Africa by our press and television. It is too easy to make moral judgements from a distance. Placed in the same circumstances as the South Africans; having to live with races who have only recently been engaged in tribal conflict and who have not yet, some of them, escaped the mystic but deadly clutches of the witch doctor, how many of us, I wonder, would not revise our ideas and our prejudices - if only to preserve the safety (moral and physical) of our children? It may be that the fruits of our ethnocentrism, as embodied in our verbal condemnation, will be none other than to precipitate a conflict which might not have occurred if we had not been so intolerant. Left to itself, apartheid, when the time was naturally propitious, might have gradually extinguished itself. In forcing the issue we may cause more problems than we solve.

In an essay on Political Theory, Morris Ginsberg has distinguished the first two of the kinds of ethical relativity in the following way. The theory that moral value is relative to the subject asserting it he calls psychological relativism. The theory that moral value is relative to the type of society in which it is asserted he calls sociological relativism. As an adherent of the former he gives Bertrand Russell; of the latter, Durkheim is the most notable example. Westermarck's ideas (and my own) combine all three types.

Two other types have been distinguished in an American Journal 'The Philosophical Review' in a paper by Paul W. Taylor. These are theoretical or logical relativism in which it is claimed moral statements can be justified but only by presupposing the value of

1 'Four Types of Ethical Relativism'. 
reasonableness which cannot be justified; and methodological relativism (also mentioned by Brandt) in which moral statements are true or false and their truth or falsity is relative to the method of validating them.

W.K. Frankena has distinguished three types of relativism:
descriptive relativism which holds that 'the basic ethical beliefs and value judgements of different people and societies are different and even conflicting'; meta-ethical relativism according to which there is no objective way of validating moral judgements; and normative relativism which maintains that what is right or good for one person may not be for another even if the situations of each are similar.
CHAPTER 2  WESTERMARCK’S ACCOUNT OF THE DIVERSITY OF MORALS

As a matter of fact do people make different moral judgements? This question sooner or later confronts the relativist and my object here is to answer it. If everyone everywhere consistently made the same moral judgements, the case for ethical relativity would be considerably weakened. For it owes its existence to the observations, by those who have upheld it, that there is a considerable disagreement of moral opinion throughout the world. If morals were uniform it is doubtful if ethical relativity would exist at all. Some absolutists, indeed, have found it difficult to accept that a contrary moral view to their own is possible. The story is told of G.E. Moore that one of the reasons for his formidable success in argument was due to his habit of saying, with genuine surprise, 'But do you really think that? How remarkable!' For relativism to have any credibility, therefore, the diversity of moral judgements has to be demonstrated. My intention, accordingly, is to provide evidence to show that people in the same society make different moral judgements; that between people in different societies in the same age there are differences in moral judgements; and that for any one society, there are differences in the moral judgements of the people of that society at different historical periods.

Among the first to illustrate the diversity of moral judgements was John Locke (1690). He tried to show by means of anthropological data, mainly consisting of the observations of travellers, that 'there is scarce that Principle of Morality to be named, or Rule of Vertue to be thought on (those only excepted, that are absolutely necessary to hold Society together, which commonly too are neglected betwixt distinct Societies) which is not, somewhere or other, slighted and condemned by

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1 A moral judgement is distinguished by the use of moral words such as ought, should, right etc.

2 Locke was not, however, a relativist.
the general Fashion of whole Societies of men'. More elaborate compilations have since been produced by Herbert Spencer (1892), Westermarck (1906), Wundt (1912), Sutherland (1898), Carveth Reid (1909) and Hobhouse (1906). Since I am interested in Westermarck's theory of the origin of moral ideas, I propose to confine myself to his account of the variety of moral judgements both because the latter impinges on the former and because in any case there is insufficient space to devote to an exhaustive account of the available evidence. As it is, I shall be doing Westermarck a disservice by attempting to compress several hundred pages into several and much of the impressive force of his arguments will totally disappear. Nevertheless, this will be adequate for my purpose. Moreover, since at the end I shall examine Westermarck's work in the light of modern work, I shall thereby circumvent whatever difficulties a too rigid adherence to one account could cause.

According to Westermarck on one point there is uniformity: the subjects of moral valuation are not variable. Moral judgements he says 'are passed on conduct and character'. And the variations in moral judgements depend upon 'different ideas relating to the objective nature of similar modes of conduct and their consequences. Such differences of ideas may arise from different situations and external conditions of life which consequently influence moral opinion'.

Thus the custom of killing or abandoning parents who are worn out with age or disease prevails among a large number of savage tribes and occurred formerly among many Asiatic and European nations including the Vedic and Teutonic peoples. Among the Californian Gallinomero when the

2 'Ethical Relativity' p.183
3 ibid p.184
father is too old to gather his load of fuel or basket of acorns and is a burden to his sons "'the poor old wretch is not unfrequently thrown down on his back and securely held while a stick is placed across his throat and two of them seat themselves on the ends of it until he ceases to breathe'". The same custom applies in several other North American tribes, the natives of Brazil, various South Sea islanders, a few Australian tribes and some people in Africa and Asia. There is even an old English tradition of "'the Holy Mawle, which they fancy hung behind the church door, which when the father was seaventie, the sonne might fetch to knock his father in the head as effete and of no more use'". This custom is common among nomadic people owing to the inability of the old to keep up in the march; and, in times when food is short, it seems more reasonable that the old and infirm should have to perish rather than the young and vigorous. Moreover, such customs may persist partly from the fixity of tradition and from motives such as euthanasia.

Infanticide is another instance. Children may be a burden to their parents in time of famine or of war. Thus the custom of exposing the less suitable children arises. The murder of female infants was practised by some of the Semites and regarded in certain circumstances as a duty, and it was a genuine custom among certain Hindu castes. 'The exposure of deformed or sickly infants was a custom in Greece; at Sparta, at least, it was enjoined by law' Aristotle himself laid down the rule that 'nothing imperfect or maimed shall be brought up' and proposed to limit the number of children born to each marriage

1 The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas' p.386. The inset comes from Hearne's Journey to the Northern Ocean p.346.

2 'Ethical Relativity' p.184 (also in 'The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas; the original source is 'Anecdotes and Traditions' - Thomas p.84)

3 ibid p.186

4 ibid p.186
utilising abortion after this number had been reached. 'There should certainly be a law', he writes, 'to prevent the rearing of deformed children. On the other hand there should also be a law, in all states where the system of social habits is opposed to unrestricted increase, to prevent the exposure of children to death merely in order to keep the population down. The proper thing to do is to limit the size of each family, and if children are then conceived in excess of the limit so fixed, to have miscarriage induced before sense and life have begun in the embryo'. According to Westermarck, Roman law also enjoined the killing of deformed infants. Although he was quite correct in making this assertion, it was not always the case among the Romans that deformed children were allowed to be killed. Schultz says, 'The father had the right to expose or kill his new born child and only Valentinian abolished this'. While the law was subsequently abrogated, however, it 'was maintained throughout the classical period'. It is interesting that while the Greeks always wished to restrain population expansion, the Romans, having grand imperial ambitions, tried to encourage the numbers of healthy children although even so it was not a serious offence to expose them.

One reason then for the variability of moral judgements is the differences in the conditions of life. The main reasons, however, according to Westermarck, are the differences in knowledge and in belief. 'Religion or superstition has on the one hand stigmatized murder and suicide, on the other hand it has commended human sacrifice and certain cases of voluntary self-destruction'. Human sacrifice 'is found not only among many savages but occurred in early times among

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3 ibid p.151
4 ibid p.187
all Indo-European peoples, the Semites, and the Japanese, and among
the Mayas and the Aztecs, who practised it on an enormous scale. How did it arise? "The chief thing is that people know or believe
that on some certain occasion they are in danger of losing their lives;
they attribute this to the designs of a supernatural being; and, by
sacrificing a man, they hope to gratify that being's craving for human
life and thereby avert the danger from themselves." Thus human
sacrifice is a kind of life insurance. It is not therefore 'wrong'
or cruel when practised in what is conceived to be the national interest.

Human sacrifice is not, however, the only thing practised which is
shocking to Christians. Another is suicide. In China and Japan, in
many circumstances suicide is regarded as an honourable act. The
Hindus have always regarded it as 'one of the most acceptable rites that
can be offered to their deities.' The Old Testament nowhere forbids
suicide; nor does the law of Pagan Rome. The Greek tragedians fre-
quently express the view that in certain circumstances it is 'becoming
to a noble mind'. Their fellow philosophers were divided: Plato and
Aristotle being against it, the Stoics advocating it as a relief from
misery.

Prior to St. Augustine, suicide was approved of in certain cases
'namely, when committed in order to procure martyrdom, or to avoid
apostasy or to retain the crown of virginity.' By the 6th Century,
however, these exceptions had disappeared until suicide was even said
to be 'the most grievous thing of all'. Aquinas gave three arguments
for this: it is against natural inclination; it is an injury to the

1 ibid p.188
2 ibid p.188
3 ibid p.189
4 ibid p.190
5 ibid p.190; apostasy means the renunciation of one's vows.
6 ibid p.190
community, and it usurps the authority of God on matters of life and death. Of these, the second is borrowed from Aristotle but the others are rooted in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine that life is sacred and that earthly sufferings are to be endured in preparation for a life after death.

Finally, homosexual practices have been differently judged by different peoples. In Greece, although 'pederasty in its baser forms was censured', homosexual attachment 'was praised as the highest form of love.... as a path leading to virtue, as a weapon against tyranny, as a safeguard of civic liberty, as a source of national greatness and glory'\(^1\). In pagan Rome, not much attention was paid to it. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, however, 'a veritable crusade was opened against sodomy'\(^2\). Several emperors made it a capital offence and during the Middle Ages 'Christian lawmakers thought that nothing but a painful death in the flames could atone for the sinful act'\(^3\). In France people were still being burned for sodomy in the latter part of the 18th century and in England it was punishable by death until 1861. On the other hand, in some circumstances such as the absence or exclusion of women, homosexuality has been much less critically regarded. Thus the Ancient Scandinavians ignored it. The Chinese thought it less hurtful than ordinary immorality. In Japan, there was no law against it till 1868. Although Mohammed forbade it, it is practically regarded as peccadillo in the Mohammedan world. Moreover, among the Canaanites, "besides female prostitutes there were male prostitutes or qedeshim attached to the temples. The sodomitic acts committed with the latter seem, like the connexions with the female temple prostitutes,

\(^1\) ibid p.192
\(^2\) ibid p.192
\(^3\) ibid p.192
\(^4\) ibid p.193
to have had in view to transfer blessings to the worshippers; in Morocco supernatural benefits are to this day expected not only from heterosexual but also from homosexual intercourse with a holy person.1

In some respects, as Westermarck easily admits, there is uniformity in moral judgements. Thus 'in every savage community homicide is prohibited as a custom and so is theft. Savages also regard charity as a duty and praise generosity as a virtue'.2 This holds only, however, for members of the same tribe. Apart from privileges granted to guests which are always of short duration, a stranger is in early society deprived of all rights. There are of course exceptions to this. A chief or member of a ruling class is frequently permitted to commit homicide under certain conditions. Moreover, in some societies charity would be regarded as weakness.

When we pass from savage to civilized peoples the same is true except that the tribe has become the nation. In Greece in early times the 'contemptible stranger' had no legal rights and was protected only if he was the guest of a citizen. Later in Athens, while the murder of a citizen was punishable by death the intentional killing of a non-citizen was punished only with exile. The ancient Romans did not punish the killing of a foreigner by death unless he was a member of an allied nation. In Teutonic countries hospitality was restricted to three days only; thereafter the stranger had no legal rights. Later when trade increased the foreigner enjoyed royal protection, but in the middle ages, 'All Europe seems to have tacitly agreed that foreigners had been created for the purpose of being robbed'.3 In the 13th century there were still places in France where if a foreigner remained for a year and

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1 1932
2 ibid p.195 Westermarck was an acknowledged authority on Morocco.
3 ibid p.197
4 ibid p.198
a day he became a serf of the Lord of the Manor.

It is abundantly clear, therefore, that between people in different societies in the same age there are differences in moral judgements. At any one historical period some societies have regarded homosexuality, or human sacrifice or suicide or patricide or infanticide etc. as morally right while others have either looked upon them as of little moral significance or as being morally wrong. It is equally clear that for any one society there are differences in the moral judgements of the people of that society at different historical periods. If the tourist industry were any criterion, all Europe now seems to have agreed that the foreigner has been created for the purpose of being made welcome and well treated, for the frequency of his visits depends upon the welcome he receives; and it is a fact that many countries rely on tourism to balance the national budget. If you rob the itinerant foreigner these days you merely ensure that neither he nor his friends will return to your land. Moreover, as has been shown, although suicide was once approved of, it was by the 6th century disapproved of in this country. The moral judgements made on homosexual practices have also changed. The recent changes in the laws relating to homosexuality indicate a clear difference on this particular question between Britain of 1970 and Britain of the 1890's when Oscar Wilde was tried and condemned for it. There has similarly been a change in regard to adultery or divorce. Once these were widely condemned in our society so much so that divorce was not even permitted by law. Pre-marital sexual practices have also experienced changes. What was once regarded as wrong is now in the minds of many people either morally insignificant being in many cases an understandable peccadillo or is even regarded as being morally justified if financial circumstances, say, preclude an early marriage.

The laws of a country do not of course directly reflect its morality. They are however, the most obvious diagnostic.
However, unquestionably some people still regard pre-marital sexual practices or homosexuality or adultery in all circumstances to be wrong. Others think that circumstances may arise when these are right. Furthermore, some people approve of divorce while for others divorce is morally wrong. Again, some approve of birth control while others vehemently do not. Some approve capital punishment while others condemn it. Some condemn all war; others distinguish between just and unjust wars. There are, therefore serious differences of moral opinion in our society today.

Now it has been objected against Westermarck's catalogue of anthropological data (certainly by Morris Ginsberg) that it does not faithfully represent the facts. It is argued that it oversimplifies the matter. 'Morals', says Ginsberg, 'never constitute closed systems but contain divergent and conflicting elements derived from different sources and they are liable to constant change by the action of rebels and innovators'. He thinks, therefore, that one cannot speak of the morality of the Greeks or of the Hottentots, for example. There is no doubt that in any society there is within it some degree of difference. However, 'the more primitive societies are, the more resemblances there are among the individuals who compose them'. In primitive societies custom is both law and morals. To differ is to die or be expelled. It does make sense to speak of the morality of primitive societies since there is a high degree of uniformity within them. But one can also speak meaningfully of the morality of advanced societies. For each society exhibits moral characteristics which distinguish it from other societies. One could for example make a list of the subjects of moral judgements and one could include, slavery, homosexuality, marriage, infanticide, patricide etc. Each society can be compared

1 'Essays in Sociology and Social Philosophy' p.239
2 'Division of Social Labour', Durkheim p.133
with these as the basis of comparison. Attention can be paid to the practices of the society as manifested in its laws.

On a three point scale, 5th century Athens would score positively on slavery and suicide (since these were permitted, even admired) positively on homosexuality and marriage; positively on infanticide, negatively on patricide. By contrast, the Hottentots would score, along with the Eskimos and others, positively on patricide. The Tahitians would score positively on infanticide and human sacrifice. The arioi, except for the very highest among them, were childless not because they were celibate for they practised free love but because they strangled their children at birth. This kept the sect exclusive and also prevented over population. 'No one knows how many children were thus dispatched every year but it must have been a considerable total since the arioi themselves were very numerous.' The Australian Aborigines, likewise, score positively on infanticide for in times of famine they killed and ate their children. Our own society would score negatively on slavery, and on suicide (since we are most of us influenced by the Christian attitude to it) positively on marriage, neutrally on homosexuality and negatively on infanticide. Although Westermarck's description is an oversimplification, therefore, it is nonetheless meaningful and useful in demonstrating the differences between societies and in accounting to some extent for these.

Differences in moral judgements have recently been the subject of psychological investigation. Hartshorne and May's pencil and paper tests of moral knowledge and moral opinion have shown 'that adults would disagree with one another on many moral judgements.' Moreover, "A complex society like the United States does not at any one time have a single morality but rather many moralities distributed among regional

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1 'The Fatal Impact' - Alan Moorehead p.7
2 ibid p.174
3 'Social Psychology' - R. Brown p.411
and occupational and socio-economic subcultures. The morality of the total culture is not homogeneous but is a patterned diversity. Morality is always in the making, always controversial at some points, as witness the continual evolution of the law through court decisions, the contemporary dispute over the civil rights of Negroes and the dispute among intellectuals concerning Hannah Arendt's book 'Eichmann in Jerusalem'.

Now, what does the diversity of morals show in regard to the question being considered here: namely, whether moral values are objective or not? The diversity of morals shows that it is at least not self-evident that any given set of moral values are objective. One of Sidgwick's conditions for the self-evidence of a proposition is that there must be an adequate consensus of opinion in its favour. "In fact 'universal' or 'general' consent has often been held to constitute by itself a sufficient evidence of the truth of the most important beliefs; and is practically the only evidence upon which the greater part of mankind can rely". One indispensable negative condition which must be satisfied before any proposition is to be regarded as self-evident is, therefore, that its truth should be universally conceded. The diversity of morals shows that there is no unanimity of opinion in regard to moral values. It follows that it is not self-evident that moral values are objective.

Moreover, some people (of whom Strawson is one) would regard as objective any proposition which would provoke universal assent. The variability of moral judgements suggests that no moral judgement would receive universal assent. On this meaning of 'objective' then, moral judgements (or, for that matter, moral values) are not objective. It will be recalled, however, that Westermarck is not using the word

1 ibid p.411
2 'The Methods of Ethics' p.90
3 Moral judgements are expressions of moral values
objective in this sense. "The supposed objectivity of moral values", as he understands it, "implies that they have a real existence apart from any reference to a human mind, that what is said to be good or bad, right or wrong, cannot be reduced merely to what people think to be good or bad, right or wrong".¹
Westermarck contends that all moral concepts are ultimately based on emotions. By moral concepts he means the predicates of moral judgements. Thus good, bad, right and wrong are at the same time moral concepts and ethical predicates. The question Westermarck poses is not what emotions prompt people to make moral judgements (for many emotions are involved) but whether there are any specific emotions which have led to the formation of moral concepts. If there are, these, he says, 'may be appropriately named moral emotions'. He maintains that there are two moral emotions: moral approval and moral disapproval or indignation. These have certain characteristics which distinguish them from non-moral emotions. These will be discussed later.

The moral emotions belong to a wider class of emotions which he calls retributive emotions. Moreover, moral disapproval is allied to non-moral retributive emotions such as anger and revenge while moral approval is allied to what he calls 'non-moral retributive kindly emotion, which in its most developed form is gratitude'. 'Moral disapproval, like anger and revenge, forms a subspecies of resentment and approval, like gratitude, forms a subspecies of retributive kindly emotion'. Westermarck's scheme is, therefore, as follows:

Retributive Emotions

- Resentment
  - Non-moral Disapproval (Anger and Revenge)
  - Moral Disapproval
    - Moral Emotions
      - Moral Approval
      - Non-moral Retributive Kindly Emotion (Gratitude)

1 Ethical Relativity p.62
2 ibid p.63
3 ibid p.63
"In classifying certain emotions under the common heading 'resentment'," he writes, "I have done so because they may all be described as a hostile attitude of mind towards a living being, or something taken for a living being, as a cause of pain, whatever the circumstances may be that have aroused it in each particular case. This common characteristic seems to me a most legitimate ground of classification on account of the uniformity of its function and its extreme importance in the life of the species. Resentment, like protective reflex action, from which it has gradually developed, is a means of protection for the animal owing to its tendency to remove a cause of danger. The disposition to experience it may consequently be regarded as an element in the animal's mental constitution which has been acquired through the influence of natural selection in the struggle for existence".

Anger and revenge may be distinguished, in Westermarck's opinion, in that the former is sudden resentment unrestrained by deliberation, while the latter is characterised by a hostile reaction which is restrained by reason and calculation. Initially, men reacted spontaneously to remove causes of pain. At this level, the resentment shown takes the form of anger. Even dogs and monkeys exhibit non-moral resentment of this primitive kind. In order to remove a cause of pain when another living being has been the source, it is invariably necessary to cause pain in return. In time, the removal of a cause of pain became associated with inflicting pain in return. So much so, that the infliction of pain became, after pain had been suffered, an end in itself. In this way, according to Westermarck, revenge (which is limited to human beings) developed from anger.

To cause suffering or destruction to an offender is a marked characteristic of early societies. In the Old Testament it was 'the
duty of a man to avenge the murder of his relative'. According to Aristotle 'to take revenge on a foe rather than to be reconciled is just, and therefore honourable'. Thus from primitive anger develops the idea of revenge as a duty; and 'the person on whom it is incumbent is an object of moral blame if he does not perform that duty'. However, sometimes his feeling of revenge may appear to be too meagre or too extreme. He may exact too little or too much. Moreover, 'as long as retaliation is in the hands of private individuals, there is no guarantee, on the one hand, that the offender will have to suffer, on the other, that the act of retaliation will be sufficiently discriminating'. For these reasons, therefore, customs arose whereby each offence against an individual was punished not by the sufferer but by the society at large. Thus it was, that judicial systems eventually developed.

'The more the moral consciousness is influenced by the altruistic sentiment, the more severely it condemns any retributive infliction of pain that it regards as undeserved; and it seems to be in the first place with a view to preventing such injustice that teachers of morality have enjoined upon men to forgive their enemies'. Thus together with the doctrine of resentment we find the doctrine of forgiveness. These are not incompatible, for what the latter condemns is non-moral resentment: that is, it condemns personal hatred but not 'impartial indignation'. It prohibits revenge but not punishment. The aggressive nature of moral disapproval accordingly becomes modified by a more discriminating attitude towards resentment and retaliation and by a condemnation of causing suffering merely for the sake of retribution.

1 ibid p.71
2 ibid p.71
3 ibid p.72
4 ibid p.73
5 The altruistic sentiment is 'a disposition of mind that is particularly apt to display itself as kindly emotion towards other beings' - ibid p.97
6 ibid p.74
'While resentment is a hostile attitude of mind towards a living being (or something taken for a living being) as a cause of pain', writes Westermarck, 'retributive kindly emotion is a friendly attitude of mind towards such a being as a cause of pleasure. Just as in the lower forms of anger there can be no definite desire to produce suffering, so in the lower forms of retributive kindliness there can be no definite desire to produce pleasure. When an emotion of a non-moral kind contains such a desire to give pleasure in return for pleasure received, it is called gratitude. Intermingled with gratitude there is often a feeling of indebtedness'. Retributive kindly emotion is less frequent in the animal world, says Westermarck, than resentment. Anyone may provoke an animal's anger but only towards certain close associates is it apt to feel retributive kindliness. Thus, in the family group the associated animals take pleasure in each other's company. 'The altruistic sentiment', he writes, 'would never have come into existence without such a reciprocity of feeling.

'Retributive kindly emotion has the tendency to retain a cause of pleasure, just as resentment has the tendency to remove a cause of pain. And as natural selection accounts for the origin of the disposition to feel resentment, so also it accounts for the origin of the disposition to feel retributive kindly emotion. Both of these emotions are useful to the species: by resentment evils are averted, by retributive kindliness benefits are secured.'

One crucial question which arises in connexion with a theory which holds that moral concepts are emotionally based is whether emotion precedes or succeeds moral judgement. In answer to this, Westermarck writes, 'Whatever emotions may follow moral judgements, such judgements could never have been pronounced unless there had been moral emotions

1 ibid p.86
2 ibid p.87
in somebody antecedent to them. The moral concepts, which form their predicates, are ultimately generalizations of tendencies to feel either moral approval or disapproval with reference to that of which those concepts are predicated; and if a judgement containing such a predicate evokes a moral emotion, it can only do so because it is based on a similar emotion'. According to Louis Arnaud Reid in his review of 'Ethical Relativity', Westermarck merely states emphatically that emotion is antecedent to moral judgements. However, from the above it seems clear that Westermarck is doing more than this. He is arguing that a moral judgement such as 'x is wrong' would not now be made unless at some time it was the case that x aroused emotions of disapproval in the members of the society for which x is now thought to be wrong. For, Westermarck contends, a moral concept is ultimately a generalization of a tendency on the part of the people of a society to feel moral approval or disapproval. If this premise can be accepted then, and it does seem plausible, Westermarck's argument is convincing; and it is an argument, not merely an assertion.

Now, if moral disapproval is a form of resentment and moral approval is a form of retributive kindly emotion, what distinguishes these from non-moral emotions such as anger, revenge and gratitude? That is, to what does a moral emotion owe its moral nature? A judgement is a moral one, according to Westermarck, if it has the character of disinterestedness. That is, if a judgement were passed on someone it would be a moral one if it were held to apply to anyone else in similar circumstances. 'If', therefore, 'the moral concepts are generalizations of tendencies to feel moral emotions and at the same time contain the notion of disinterestedness, we must conclude that the emotions from which they spring are felt disinterestedly'. Thus the disinterestedness which

1 ibid p.90
2 'Mind' 1933 Vol.42 p.85
3 Ethical Relativity p.91
attaches to moral judgements derives from a disinterested feeling towards others.

Two other moral emotions, which Westermarck mentions, are remorse and self approval. These also are felt disinterestedly in that 'almost inseparable from the moral judgement that we pass on our own conduct seems to be the image of an impartial outsider who acts as our judge'. Thus we are disinterested in approving or disapproving morally of our own conduct. And it is only so long as we are disinterested that our self assessments are moral.

It might be thought at this point that disinterestedness is not very far removed from objectivity. In fact, however, the person who is disinterested or who 'feels disinterestedly' need not suppose (indeed, has no grounds for supposing) that everyone else would or should draw the same conclusions as himself. A man may be disinterested while admitting that for other men, no less disinterested than himself, other moral judgements are possible in any given situation and that these are just as 'moral' as his own. Objectivity, on the other hand, implies that only one judgement in any situation is morally right: contrary ones are morally wrong, and all men 'ought' to agree that that unique judgement is the only 'right' one.

'Why should we, quite disinterestedly', asks Westermarck, 'feel pain calling forth disapproval because our neighbour is hurt, and pleasure calling forth approval because he is benefited?' One reason is the feeling of sympathy which is a characteristic of human beings. The sight of bodily suffering tends to produce a feeling of pain in the spectator due to the fact that the perception of the physical manifestations of the feeling produces the feeling itself on account of the established association between them. That is, to take an example,

1 ibid p.95
2 ibid p.96
if we observe someone having his finger nails removed under torture, because of the established association in our minds between that torture and the feeling of pain which it is known to produce, we not only see the torture but also feel the pain as if we were experiencing it. This alone is not, however, responsible, says Westermarck, for what is popularly called sympathy, for it lacks kindliness. Sympathy requires the co-operation of the altruistic sentiment which 'is above all a conative disposition to promote the welfare of its object'.

Of the two retributive emotions, resentment towards an enemy is, as a rule, a much stronger emotion than retributive kindly emotion towards a benefactor. The reason for this, according to Westermarck, is that the protection of the species is all important. In the struggle for survival the fundamental problem is the avoidance of pain or danger, generally by removing the cause of it. Westermarck quotes many examples of disinterested resentment. One here must suffice: 'Speaking of a group of chimpanzees, Professor Kohler says that if one of them is attacked before the eyes of the others, great excitement goes through the whole group. Even the lightest form of punishment, pulling the ear of the offender, or a playful pretence at punishment, often stirred single members of the group to much more decisive action. A little weak chimpanzee would run up excitedly, stretch out his arm to the punisher, if the ape was still being punished, try to hold the big man's arm tight, and finally, with exasperated gestures, start hitting out at him'.

Although less frequent in the animal world, retributive kindly emotion does occur, especially between parents and their offspring. Westermarck conceives of this as being present in mankind from the beginning. Maternal love he regards as an instinctive response which

1 ibid p.97
2 ibid p.99
is the result of natural selection and, 'which has preserved a mental disposition necessary for the existence of the species in which it is found'. Natural selection is also the reason why men are gregarious. For in groups they can protect themselves more easily from marauders and by co-operating they have been able to create ever more satisfactory conditions of existence. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that men take pleasure in each other's company. It may be because men acquired this characteristic feeling for the society of other men that they have survived and progressed. In no other species is this feeling quite so intense.

Another way in which disinterested resentment may be produced is by the cognition of the signs of resentment. Thus "among bees, ants, and termites signs of anger by one individual may awaken the whole community to a high pitch of excitement". The same phenomenon may, says Westermarck, be observed in crowds of human beings. One man gets angry because another is angry and for no other apparent reason. This form of disinterested resentment is of great importance 'both as an originator and communicator of moral ideas'.

A third source of disinterested resentment is 'disinterested antipathies' or sentimental aversions. Differences of taste, habit and opinion easily create similar likes and dislikes and these have been prominent in moulding the moral consciousness. 'When a certain act which does no harm - apart from the painful impression it makes on the spectator - fills people with disgust or horror, they may feel no less inclined to inflict harm upon the agent than if he had committed an offence against person, property or good name'.

Having satisfied himself that he has found the origin of disinterested retributive emotions, Westermarck goes on to say that they are 'not only

1 ibid p.101
2 ibid p.106 quoted from 'The Evolution of Animal Intelligence' - S.J. Holmes
3 ibid p.106
4 ibid p.107
disinterested, but impartial in a wider sense, or at least, are not knowingly partial'. Such impartiality is possible because of custom, for customs are not only public habits but rules of conduct. To say this is to assert that every deviation from custom is apt to call forth public disapproval. The need for the qualification 'not knowingly partial' becomes apparent when customs such as slavery or the subjection of women are concerned. They may have originated in selfishness, in partiality but 'however partial a certain rule may be, it becomes a true custom, a moral rule, as soon as the selfishness or partiality of its makers is lost sight of'. There are examples of slaves and women alike who have strongly resisted any attempt to emancipate themselves. What was once a rule set up by self interested men had become an impartial social custom. In invoking custom, Westermarck, does not think he is contradicting his earlier proposition that moral emotions are at the bottom of all moral judgements. For a custom is a moral rule only because of the disapproval called forth when it is broken. It is the disapproval which makes it a moral rule. For the custom itself 'is nothing but a generalization of emotional tendencies, applied to certain modes of conduct and transmitted from generation to generation'.

Moral progress, in which Westermarck emphatically believes, is also explained. With the advancement of successive civilizations the unanimity of opinion which originally was the hallmark of the same social unit was gradually disturbed. 'Individuals arose who found fault with the moral ideas prevalent in the community to which they belonged, criticizing them on the basis of their own individual feelings'. The dissent of individuals from the orthodox moral view often arises from the conviction that the apparent impartiality of public feelings is an illusion. In the course of history there is, in Westermarck's view, a

1 ibid p.108
2 ibid p.111
3 ibid p.111
4 ibid p.112
discernible trend towards a greater equalization of rights and towards the expansion of the circle within which the same moral rules are held to be applicable.

Having shown how the moral emotions of approval and disapproval have developed from the non-moral retributive emotions, Westermarck goes on to produce an ethical theory, the most general form of which is that the predicates of all moral judgements, that is the moral concepts such as good, right etc., are ultimately based on these moral emotions. He does not, however, mean that in saying a person or an action is good, we necessarily report a feeling of approval for we may be using the word to stand for something which others in the past have approved. We call things good 'because they have evoked moral approval or disapproval in ourselves or in other persons from whom we have learned the use of these words'\(^1\). But whatever is being called 'good' was at some time approved of by someone: the feeling of approval was once attached to the object of which we now perhaps merely express approval but without feeling.

He goes on to show that goodness and ought are not derivable from each other, for while the former is derived from approval, the latter is derived from disapproval and there is no necessary connexion between the moral emotions themselves. In a similar manner he deals with right, justice, merit, virtue and good. Since customs are rules of conduct, the adjective 'right' means that which is in obedience to these rules or commands. The substantive 'right', that is 'a right' means that which should not be prevented. The other moral concepts are similarly analysed. "The doing of what ought not to be done, or the refraining from what ought not to be refrained from, is apt to call forth moral disapproval; this is the most essential fact involved in the notion of 'ought'"\(^2\). Ought (duty), right and

\(^1\) ibid p.115

\(^2\) ibid p.123
justice are all derived from moral disapproval. 'Good' is the general expression for moral approbation. 'Virtue' is generally used to denote 'a disposition of mind that is characterised by some special kind of goodness' such as temperance or courage.

Now Westermarck's analysis is said, by Brandt for instance, to be naturalistic. According to G.E. Moore, in his classic work 'Principia Ethica', the naturalistic fallacy consists in defining a non-natural object (such as good, right etc.) in terms of a natural one (such as yellow, pleasure, approval). By a natural object, Moore meant something which could be ascertained by the senses. Thus whether something is yellow or pleasant or approved of can be empirically determined. Whether something is good or right, however, cannot, he says, be so determined. Another way of putting it is to say that the fallacy consists in attempting to define a 'simple'. 'Good' and 'right' are simples unlike 'horse' which is a 'complex'. Only complexes can be defined, and a definition is complete once all the simples which make up the complex have been enumerated.

It should be clear that Westermarck does not commit the naturalistic fallacy, for nowhere does he speak of 'defining' moral concepts. 'Definition', for Moore, was something quite specific: it entailed, as mentioned already, enumerating all the simples which together constitute the complex which is being defined. Westermarck is manifestly not attempting to do this. What he is doing is analysing moral concepts. In making the statement that good is the general expression for moral approbation, for example, Westermarck is not presuming that 'good' is equivalent to 'the general expression for moral approbation'. It follows that he cannot be said to have supposed that he had enumerated all the

1 ibid p.137
simples of which 'good' is composed. He cannot be accused therefore of attempting to define good, or indeed of attempting to define any of the moral concepts. His only concern in discussing the moral concepts is to explain how they have been derived from the moral emotions. For, in showing that moral concepts are ultimately based on emotion, he demonstrates their contingent nature. If moral concepts are emotionally based, they can have no existence apart from any human mind. That is, the concepts of right, good, etc. have been created by men. It follows, from Westermarck's definition of 'objective', that they are emphatically not objective.

'The moral emotions', he writes, 'depend upon cognitions, but the same cognitions may give rise to emotions that differ, in quality or intensity, in different persons or in the same person on different occasions, and then there is nothing that could make the emotions uniform'. Everyone experiences the emotions of approval and disapproval in differing degrees of intensity. If, therefore, two people make the moral judgement 'x is good', they are not expressing identical intensities of approval and they are not, therefore, making identical moral judgements. Their moral judgements are similar but not the same. It is no more possible for two people to experience exactly the same intensity of emotion than it is for one line in geometry to be exactly the same length as any other. For, according to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, no measuring instrument is, or could be, infinitely accurate. Thus it is not possible to obtain two lines of the same length. The theoretical probability of achieving identity in the lengths of lines is zero. In the same way no two emotions are ever identical.

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1 One difference between Moore and Westermarck is the former's insistence that 'good' is a simple, something that the latter would deny. Moore's arguments to show that 'good' is a simple are far from conclusive however. Interestingly enough, he himself is prepared to say what, for instance, 'right' means. (p.146 Principia Ethica)

2 ibid p.216
'That moral judgements could not possibly possess that universality which is characteristic of truth becomes particularly obvious when we consider that their predicates vary not only in quality but in quantity. There are no degrees of truth and falsehood; but there are degrees of goodness and badness, virtues and merits may be greater or smaller, a duty may be more or less stringent, and if there are no degrees of rightness, the reason for it is that right simply means conformity to the rule of duty'\(^1\), (and duties are more or less stringent). There are an infinite number of degrees of goodness, just as there is an infinite number of points on a finite line, however short. It follows that the probability is zero that two people, when they make the moral judgement that something is good, are referring to the same degree of goodness.

Since the moral emotions are not uniform, there is no uniformity in the meaning of ethical predicates. Thus words like 'good' mean different things to different people. Often among people in the same society the meaning may be similar, but it cannot be exactly the same for all. There is not and never could be uniformity of moral judgements since these depend upon the emotions of the individuals who make them. The moral values which are embodied in moral judgements are likewise derived from the moral emotions and are also contingent and relative to the societies and groups of which they are a part.

One difficulty to which Westermarck does not sufficiently attend is his admission that moral judgements are sometimes made without feeling. This would be the case when a person learns to call some things good or bad which have been approved of by others. It might be held that a certain class of moral judgements could be uniform in that emotions were not involved in making them. Westermarck would answer that such judgements have been, like all other moral judgements, derived from the moral emotions of our ancestors. Thus they too are not objective. His argument, then, chiefly depends upon the moral concepts being derived from the moral

\(^1\) ibid p.218
emotions. In my opinion, however, even these moral judgements involve emotion, which we learn to make because they have been approved of in the past by others. For moral judgements are characterised by, among other things, their emotive nature; either we personally are expressing approval or we are expressing disapproval. This is not of course all that is involved. Often moral judgements imply the existence of some sort of standard. Even if we merely learn to call a thing good, however, as opposed to deciding on the basis of our own feelings that that thing is good, because the same word 'good' is being applied in both cases and since one of these carries an emotive flavour, the same flavour becomes associated with the other. Having learned to call x good, for example, we thereafter call it good and the approval which attaches to 'good' when applied to other things which we do approve, becomes attached to x. Thus our judgement that x is good comes to have an emotive flavour, although it originally lacked such a flavour in our minds.

The insistence upon individual differences at the emotional level constitutes the main difference between Westermarck and Durkheim. For Durkheim, who is a sociological relativist, the human being is a kind of 'tabula rasa' on which society writes its designs and such individual differences as exist are mainly determined by the needs of society. In his emphasis upon his concepts of social solidarity and 'conscience collective' he plays down or ignores emotional differences. One consequence of this is that he does not appear to have produced a coherent or convincing account of the process by which societies change and progress takes place. Westermarck's insistence upon the emotional basis of morality, on the other hand, does admit of a coherent and intelligible theory of progress. At any given time a society consists of a number of unique individuals: they are unique in their emotional
constitution, upbringing (no two people ever have identical upbringing), experience, knowledge, etc. as well as in genetic code (the child is not just a 'tabula rasa': he embodies certain unique predispositions). Since people grow up together in a common culture they do have many things in common. But there is enough individuality within each society to account for the differences between it and previous ones.

This difference of emotional constitution Westermarck expresses as follows: 'Some cases of suffering can hardly fail to call forth compassion in the most pitiless heart; but men's disposition to feel pity varies greatly, both in regard to the beings for whom it is felt and as to the intensity of the emotion. The same holds true of the moral emotions. To a large extent their differences depend on different cognitions, but very frequently the emotions also differ though the cognitions are the same. The variations of the former kind do not interfere with the beliefs in the universality of moral judgements, but when the variations of the moral emotions may be traced to different persons' tendencies to feel differently in similar circumstances on account of the particular nature of their altruistic sentiments, the supposed universality of moral judgements is a delusion'.

What Westermarck has provided is a credible account of the origin and development of the moral ideas. The place of emotion in ethics is, therefore, paramount. What then is the place of reason in ethics? According to Westermarck, the changes in morality which have taken place throughout the centuries have been due to the influence of reason (reflection) and increasing knowledge of the objects of moral judgements. Thus in early societies no distinction is made between intentional and unintentional actions. In later societies people distinguish more clearly between these. Witness the different amounts of approval/disapproval.

ibid p.217
accorded to actions which are intentional or unintentional and likewise the different punishments given for intentional and unintentional crimes. Murder and manslaughter is an example. Yet this distinction was not always made. 'A life for a life' used to be the cry.

Also, reason has been the cause of the removal of laws and customs which have become obsolete. Were it not for the growth of reason, people would still be hanged for shoplifting (they used to be). People used to behave as if a man's life were worth no more than a loaf of bread. We certainly do not hold that this is so and our laws reflect the fact that human life is more valued than any inanimate object. Again, our anger with someone who has been guilty of telling lies may disappear and may change to approval if we learn that he has behaved in this way in order to save life. Thus reason and knowledge have affected the moral emotions, perhaps instructed them even, and are important aspects in the development or morality. Moreover, the effect of reason in weakening or abolishing magical or supernatural or religious beliefs has been thereby to weaken the morals which derive their origin from such beliefs. Actions are increasingly being regarded as moral or not in so far as they actually do harm or not. Thus many actions which are not in themselves harmful but were nonetheless regarded as immoral on account of the aversion they arouse or because of ignorance or supernatural beliefs have gradually come to be looked upon as morally neutral. Homosexuality is a good example.

Now Westermarck regards his time as 'more enlightened' than ever before and he has been criticized by Ginsberg for introducing a value category. However, according to Westermarck 'a moral judgement may be said to be more enlightened in proportion as it is influenced by reflection or knowledge, and the so-called moral evolution largely consists in
a gradual progress in enlightenment'. Although, therefore, the word 'enlightenment' usually carries an evaluative meaning, by delimiting it in this way, Westermarck has given it a factual basis. For whether something has been influenced by reflection or knowledge is, or is not a fact. It is at least partly due to the fact of the growth in reflection and knowledge that morality has changed. The only value here, therefore, is the extent to which the growth in reflection and knowledge has caused the changes in morality. What is indisputable is that they have had some effect on these changes. Westermarck has argued persuasively that this effect has been considerable.

Ginsberg is also critical of Westermarck for introducing an ideal society as the standard of comparison by which the moral innovator is able to see the absurdities in his own society. In fact such a standard of comparison does not appear in the later version of Westermarck's theory and Ginsberg is rather unfair in referring to Westermarck's early work as if it represented his last word on the subject. One need not, however, invoke the concept of an ideal society to account for moral innovation. One can regard the moral innovator (and it is evident that Westermarck so regards him) as someone who has the necessary qualities of detachment, insight, flexibility and imagination to notice that rules which once may have had a function are obsolete and have ceased to serve any purpose and should therefore be dropped. In fact, this is what effectively happens with laws: they are revised from time to time. He would also be the man who would see the need for new laws to take account of new circumstances: the fairly recent laws pertaining to air and motor traffic are examples. It is almost sufficient, however, to regard the moral innovator as someone who asks moral questions. In the age when

1 ibid p.147
2 That is questions like 'why ought we to do x?'
slavery was practised in a Christian society someone must have first asked the question: 'if all men are brothers why are some men slaves?'

Another kind of moral innovation consists, therefore, in noticing discrepancies or inconsistencies between belief and behaviour, between theory and practice and in observing that our much vaunted impartiality is a delusion.

One last thought on moral innovation. There is an experiment which the psychologists cite to illustrate 'mental dazzle': the attribute that some people exhibit which consists in them continuing to do things as they have done them in the past. Each of a number of people are given a problem to solve: 'Given a 3 gallon can, a 5 gallon can, and a river make 4 gallons'. They solve it and others like it and discover or are shown a routine method of doing it, and they become accustomed to using this routine. On being given a problem like: 'Given a 50 gallon can, a 1 gallon can and a 7 gallon can, make 58 gallons', they proceed to use the routine but laborious method! Now a few people do not fall into this trap. They seem to be able to keep their options open and they, far from adhering rigidly to what went before, are able to view the new situation with fresh eyes. The moral innovator would probably be such a person.

To sum up, Westermarck's theory is that the moral emotions of approval and disapproval are derived from the retributive emotions anger, revenge and gratitude. In support of this he writes 'It is a circumstance of the greatest importance that not only moral emotions but non-moral retributive emotions are felt with reference to phenomena exactly similar in their general nature to those on which moral judgements are passed. How could we account for this remarkable co-incidence unless the moral judgements were based on emotions and the moral emotions were retributive
emotions akin to gratitude and revenge?". That is, the things we morally disapprove of are the same things, in general, that arouse in us the feeling of anger or the desire to extract revenge. Similarly, 'the acts and forebearances which are praised as morally good are apt to call forth gratitude'.

An emotion becomes moral once it is disinterestedly felt and not knowingly partial. At this point customs or rules of conduct appear, and the moral concepts are developed from what is approved or disapproved in the society. Morality is changed by those who recognise that the supposed impartiality of moral rules is more apparent than real.

In his account of the development of morality and in demonstrating its emotional basis, Westermarck has produced a strong case against moral values being objective. For if our moral judgements (and thereby our moral values) depend ultimately on our own or our ancestors emotions, then they are contingent upon the nature of human beings and they do not have 'a real existence apart from any reference to a human mind', and that 'what is said to be good or bad, right or wrong' can be reduced 'merely to what people think to be good or bad, right or wrong'. This conclusion has important consequences for moral education. Before examining these, however, it is necessary to examine what has been said about ethical relativity since Westermarck.

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1 The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas p.741
2 ibid p.742
CHAPTER 4

ETHICAL RELATIVITY SINCE WESTERMARCK

After Westermarck, ethical relativity received strong support from the anthropologist Ruth Benedict. She followed Franz Boas in investigating cultural diversity, leaving to the psychologists the problem of exploring the possibilities of a common human nature. In 'Patterns of Culture' (1935) she is in complete agreement with Westermarck on the question of the diversity of morals and she concludes: 'The recognition of cultural relativity carries with it its own values, which need not be those of the absolutist philosophies. It challenges customary opinions and causes those who have been bred to them acute discomfort. It rouses pessimism because it throws old formulas into confusion, not because it contains anything intrinsically difficult. As soon as the new opinion is embraced as customary belief, it will be another trusted bulwark of the good life. We shall arrive then at a more realistic social faith, accepting as grounds of hope and as new bases for tolerance the co-existing and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has created for itself from the raw materials of existence'.

By the beginning of the second world war however, some psychologists had begun to question the anthropologist's findings. Thus Karl Duncker argued that 'if an act is found to receive different valuations at different times or places this is generally found to be due to different meanings'. That is, the killing of superannuated parents does not mean the same to the Hottentots as it does to us. Man to the Hottentots, he argues, means a 'limb' of society rather than a 'person of his own'. It is because of this different meaning that, if society as a whole would benefit by his death, killing him is permissible; just as if one possessed a wholly useless arm one might desire to remove it rather

1 p.278

2 Mind Vol. 48 (1939) p.44
than expend energy in carrying it around. Another example he uses is usury. Once morally condemned this is now, he says, morally neutral. The reason is that money borrowed in order that the borrower shall gain financially is quite different from money borrowed for consumption or for survival. The capitalist who borrows must expect the lender to share in his profit. The person who borrows to buy food, however, is being exploited. The meaning of the word 'interest' has changed throughout the years. Once it meant money made out of another's misfortune; now it means money made out of another's good fortune.

Thus for Duncker 'ethical valuation is not concerned with acts as abstract events in space-time. The ethical essence of an act depends upon its concrete pattern of situational meanings', i.e. the relevant features of the actual psychological situation with reference to which the subject behaves. Given the same situational meaning an act is likely to receive the same ethical valuation.

Now all that Duncker has done is to give a more elaborate reason than Westermarck for the diversity of morals. This does not, however, furnish an escape route from ethical relativity. On his view ethical valuation is relative to situational meaning, and this does not solve the problem. The point is that people in different cultures do make different valuations and there are no compelling grounds for declaring that some are more valid than others. It is unhelpful to say that if murder meant the same thing to us as it does to the Hottentots (that they) and we would make the same valuations about the future of our superannuated parents. For our moral dilemma, were we to awaken tomorrow in a Hottentot village would be no less acute for Duncker's suggestions. These do not therefore affect the conclusion that morals are relative to the culture and context. For it is these that are responsible for

1 ibid p.43
2 compelling grounds: grounds which are not, as Taylor has said, 'culture bound'
the differences in meaning.

It was not until the war had ended and the enormity of the crimes perpetrated by the nazis had been made known that a concerted attempt to escape from wholesale ethical relativity took place. If all value systems were equally valid, it seemed that while the nazis could be condemned by those who did not share their values, according to their own value system their behaviour had been justified. To many people an ethical theory which permitted such a conclusion was unpalatable. Thus psychologists, psychoanalysts and sociologists joined the anthropologists in trying to find an avenue of escape from ethical relativity. What followed then was an attempt to discover universal values, or at any rate some common denominators, with a view to limiting the unwelcome breadth of wholesale ethical relativity.

During the fifteen years after the war, psychologists such as Allport, Ames, Cantril, Frenkel-Brunswik, Hastorf, Maslow and Woodruff, to name only a few, all contributed to ethics. Frenkel-Brunswik is representative of their attitude when she says 'individuals and cultures do, on the whole, not differ widely with respect to what are considered the ultimate ethical goals... In renouncing any metaphysical or absolute position, we do not need to go to the other extreme of utter relativism'. The psychologists were not of course in complete agreement. 'Yet' according to Kluckhohn in 1955, 'there appears to be a growing trend toward agreement on two fundamentals: (1) an insistence that psychological fact and theory must be taken into account in dealing with ethical problems; (2) there are pan-human universals as regards needs and capacities that shape, or could rightly shape, at least the broad

Whole sale ethical relativity means that 'the sole invariant of morals is their sociological function to secure the preservation and welfare of a social group' - Karl Duncker, Mind Vol. 48 (1939 p.39).

broad outlines of a morality that transcends cultural difference'\textsuperscript{1}.

The Sociologists have likewise sought after universals. Kolb has written 'Surely it is probable that psychic systems the world over have certain identical basic structures and functions organized around universal psychic needs'\textsuperscript{2}. Moreover, psychoanalysts such as Rank, Abraham, Marie Bonaparte, Roheim and Erick Fromm have, according to Kluckhohn, attempted to mobilize evidence for psychic universals. Roheim has argued, for instance that because human infants are invariably dependent, have two parents of opposite sex, face the same competition for attention from siblings and have similar neurological structures that the possibilities for ethical variation are limited.

Kluckhohn himself says "Every culture has a concept of murder, distinguishing this from execution, killing in war and other 'justifiable homicides'. The motives of incest and other regulations upon sexual behaviour or prohibitions upon untruth under defined circumstances, of restitution and reciprocity, of mutual obligations between parents and children - these and many other moral concepts are altogether universal"\textsuperscript{3}. However, it is important to notice that the likenesses between cultures are 'primarily conceptual and that variation rages rampant as to details of prescribed behaviour, instrumentalities and sanctions'\textsuperscript{4}.

The efforts of the social scientists to establish or refute ethical relativism have been questioned by Paul W. Taylor\textsuperscript{5}. He argues that neither the universality nor the diversity of morals would, if established, prove or disprove ethical relativism. One could readily imagine that a totalitarian power has conquered the world and has subjected it to a particular moral code by indoctrination, brain-washing, propaganda etc.

\textsuperscript{1} ibid p.666
\textsuperscript{2} ibid p.667
\textsuperscript{3} ibid p.672
\textsuperscript{4} ibid p.672
\textsuperscript{5} 'Social Science and Ethical Relativism'; Journal of Philosophy p.32 Vol. 55 (1958)
This code would be universal but this would not make it the absolute, the 'true' moral code, the code that applies to all men in all ages. Taylor defines ethical relativity to be the doctrine that 'it is logically impossible to give good reasons (reasons which are not culture bound) for or against moral judgements'. Thus stated, ethical relativity is trivially true. Any reason for or against a moral judgement if it were to be other than spurious would require to incorporate a value judgement. However, any value judgement is of necessity culture bound. We are all evaluative prisoners: the valuations that we are wont to make depend upon the environment in which we have grown up.

The significance of the documentation of the diversity of morals, indeed of cultural diversity generally, is therefore not that it proves ethical relativism but that it draws attention to the fact that other peoples have different moral values and forces us to ask ourselves why ours should be superior. Witnessing the extent of the diversity of morals is like having someone remove a bandage from one's eyes. We recognize the possibility that the supposed existence of absolute values is a myth invented by self interested people or groups for their own survival and protection. In addition, the diversity of morals establishes that moral values are not objective if by objective is meant 'being recognised by all clear headed men to be the case'. It is manifestly not the case that all clear headed men agree in their moral judgements. It follows that they are not objective in this sense. The diversity of morals also demonstrates that it is not self-evident (as some absolutists have claimed) that moral values are objective. For an indispensable negative condition for self-evidence, is universal agreement.

That morality is so diverse, that cultures are so different, is the reason then why there are ethical relativists. The diversity of morals explains why some people are ethical relativists. And if morality the

1 ibid p.33
world over were uniform it is doubtful if there would even be a meta-
ethical theory of ethical relativity, let alone anyone to support it. It is important then both for the existence and credibility of ethical relativity that there should be different standards of morality in the world. The importance of the work of the social scientists in this regard has lain in the fact not that they have proved ethical relativity but that they set philosophers the task of proving what seemed to some of them at least a possibility and to others, an empirical fact.

If we accept the premises:

(1) that our emotions are engaged when we make moral judgements,
(2) that in similar situations different people experience emotions which differ in kind or intensity,

then ethical relativism is in a very strong position indeed, for the uniformity of moral judgements is not possible, now or ever. Moreover, if we accept Westermarck's conclusion that the moral concepts were derived ultimately from the moral emotions, which themselves are founded in the retributive emotions of anger, revenge and gratitude, then we must also conclude that ethical relativity is well nigh impregnable. Another powerful reason in support of ethical relativity, that given by Taylor, is the utter impossibility of providing compelling arguments to show that the different moral values of other people are morally erroneous. We can convince ourselves that they are wrong according to our standards of value but we cannot compel them to our conclusions from their different value premises.

The scientists therefore seek in vain for an escape from ethical relativity. All systems of ethics are equally valid in the sense that different systems are not comparable; for there is no absolute method of making a comparison. That is, there is no method which is not
culture bound and thereby relative to that culture. Each society's value system is by definition, valid in its own eyes.

Surprisingly, some people have concluded from the work of the social scientists already referred to that there are 'universal values'. Kupperman (1970), for instance, says "relativism is not refuted (although it may be undermined) by social scientific claims to have demonstrated the 'existence of universal values' at the 'conceptual level'". Evidently, if relativism may be 'undermined' by the existence of universal values so will absolutism be undermined if no such universals exist.

In fact of course what has been suggested is that there are universal values at the conceptual level, not universal values. No one has yet discovered a synthetic proposition which every member of the human race is agreed upon of the form 'x should always be done'. It is noteworthy, moreover, that both Westermarck and Ruth Benedict report members of different Indian tribes who lacked altogether the concept of war. One is forced to conclude then that the word 'universal' as used by Kluckhohn, Linton and other social scientists is perhaps being used with less precision than a philosopher would expect. This conclusion is in fact sustained by a careful reading of their work: Kluckhohn is really talking about the possible existence of near universals. No one would be surprised by this in an age when there is so much communication between the peoples of the world. For there is a sense in which increasing contact between peoples is creating one race, with a certain common core of values, out of many. This common core is being produced to permit co-existence and useful points of contact which are desirable for all cultures. Nevertheless it has still to be shown that there is a moral value upon which all men are agreed and it is in this sense therefore
that there are no universal values. Benedict is quite explicit about this. 'We might suppose' she says 'that in the matter of taking life all peoples would agree in condemnation. On the contrary, in a matter of homicide, it may be held that one is blameless if diplomatic relations have been severed between neighbouring countries, or that one kills by custom his first two children, or that a husband has right of life and death over his wife, or that it is the duty of the child to kill his parents before they are old. It may be that those are killed who steal a fowl, or who cut their upper teeth first, or who are born on a Wednesday' 1. On Kupperman's own terms, therefore, the non-existence of universal values undermines absolutism.

Kupperman's principal argument against relativism, however, is that it involves 'a sharp departure from ordinary English' 2. "Ordinary English", he says, "does not allow us to speak of the goodness of a thing as simply a function of opinions or attitudes. The ordinary translation of 'X is good' is not anything like 'I (or my society) approve of X'. The ordinary meaning would be more like 'Even if my society and I did not approve of X, X still would be good'" 3. However, even if people do ordinarily mean this, this fact alone does not establish the objectivity of 'good'. The relativist would answer: all that is happening is that ordinary people refer, or seem to refer, to an objective good. But this is no guarantee that such a thing exists, that good is objective. Ordinary people used to think that the earth was flat but that proved to be an error on their part.

Kupperman considers the question of whether certain things are 'really right' or 'really good'. He concedes straight away that judgements containing such predicates cannot be proved and he then attempts to deal with the suggestion of some relativists that judgements that

1 Patterns of Culture p.45
2 Ethical Knowledge p.69
3 ibid p.69
something is really right or really good lack clear meaning. A common objection would be that no one has the authority to claim that anything is really right or really good. Kupperman, however, rightly says, "that what we claim very frequently exceeds what we are entitled to be sure of. In the light of this", he continues, "unless we reject ordinary language it is fallacious to argue that because one cannot prove that certain things are 'really right' (or 'really good') we can, in fact, never claim that certain things are really right or good". Nevertheless, as has been said already, claims by themselves establish nothing.

Kupperman next invokes Wittgenstein's dictum, 'the meaning is the use', to argue that since statements such as 'x is really good' are made, they are meaningful. Even relativists, he says, make such statements and that they do so shows that they know the meaning of them. The relativist can, however, reply that while he may occasionally fall into the common habit of using the predicate 'really good', in fact he means by it something other than its ordinary meaning. He may say "if I say 'x is really good' all I mean is 'I and my society approve of x'". How could anyone deny this? Clearly, the relativist alone is able to assert what he means by a predicate.

It is remarkable that Kupperman should invoke Wittgenstein, who was plainly a relativist to establish absolutism. Even his criterion of meaning is relativistic. For Wittgenstein, there was no fixed entity good, only the word 'good', which applies to certain classes of things and whose meaning changes from age to age and is different between different peoples. In the 'Philosophical Investigations' he speaks of 'language games' which we all take part in. Nothing about these is objective, even the rules of the games are created by those who participate in them. What is most surprising is that Kupperman apparently

1 ibid p.72
agrees with this. 'I must make an important admission', he says, 'It is that our way of speaking does appear, at least to some degree, to be changing. It is clear that in the contemporary climate of ethical opinion there is considerable sympathy for the extreme tolerance that relativism is recognized as promoting, and considerable sympathy for relativism. This inevitably must affect ways of using ethical language.... it is not inconceivable that the time will come when the dominant patterns of ethical discourse will be relativistic.'

This is quite remarkable. The core of his objections to relativism lay in the fact that people ordinarily speak as if there were absolutes, as if ethical predicates were objective. Now, he tells us that he can conceive of ordinary people speaking as if ethical predicates will be used as if they are relativistic, and it seems that he even thinks that because meanings change this will happen. When this does happen nothing will remain of his argument, for it depended upon people speaking as if ethical predicates were objective.

If we leave this aside, however, his argument as it stands now, achieves very little. To demonstrate the objectivity of 'good', say, he would require to show that it existed independently of men, that moral judgements which included it were true or false for all men, indeed are true or false independently of men. To achieve this he has introduced a criterion of meaning which is relativistic. But he plainly cannot establish anything absolute from such a criterion. It would be like moving at speed in a universe without reference points except for one object in the near distance. How could you determine whether it was stationary or not? All that can be determined is its speed relative to you. The problem of deriving something absolute from something relative is no less insoluble.

1 ibid p.79
On the question of the relation between relativism and tolerance, Kupperman is in agreement with D.H. Monro, who is a relativist, that 'tolerance does not really follow from relativism'. There may be no logical reason which is guaranteed to prevent us from pursuing our own values singlemindedly, at the expense of everyone else's. This is perfectly true, but trivial: no 'logical reason' is guaranteed to prevent anyone from doing anything. What the absolutist or objectivist asserts is that moral judgements are true or false, that there is only one court of appeal and that all actions can be judged by it. Intolerance is therefore logically justified by the absolutist on the basis of his moral absolutes. The absolutist may be intolerant, therefore, but if so, he thinks himself logically justified in so being. The relativist may also be intolerant but, and it is an important but, he would not claim that he was logically justified in being intolerant. Because for the relativist there is no ultimate court of appeal from which he could derive his justification. This difference is crucial. It is a characteristic of men that they are unwilling to admit that they act without justification, they need to be able to justify themselves to others, and it is for this reason that relativism is less likely to evoke intolerance than absolutism. This, Kupperman is perfectly willing to admit. 'It must be conceded', he says 'that there are fewer intolerant relativists than there are intolerant people who speak about ethical questions in the ordinary (absolutist) way, and that this is a natural outcome of relativism'. There is then a sense in which tolerance follows from relativism: the relativist is more likely to be tolerant. This is very significant in a world where intolerance is so widespread.

This said, it must be conceded that there will usually be reasons for the relativist being intolerant when he is so, and these constitute

1 Empiricism and Ethics p.114
2 Ethical Knowledge p.75
3 ibid p.75. The brackets are mine.
for him a justification, though not a logical one. However, he will
not expect other people or, if he is a sociological relativist, members
of other societies to accept his justification. So far then as the
relativist can be said to justify his intolerance, this justification
has authority in the context of his own society, only for himself, or
for the group of which he is a member; in the context of nations, only
for his country. His justification carries much less force than
than the absolutist's, for the absolutist claims that his justification
has authority for all men. Moreover, in being intolerant, in righting
'wrongs', the absolutist feels that he is rendering a service towards
these people of whom he is intolerant. Some early visitors to South
America, for example, are reported to have killed as many natives as
possible after administering the sacraments; on the grounds that if the
natives were left in peace there was a high probability that after the
visitors left, no one would be qualified to administer the sacraments to
the natives when their natural hour approached. Thus to save them from
being eternally damned it was in their best interests to be killed.
The relativist does not imagine that in being intolerant he renders
anyone a service but himself, or his associates, or the members of his
society. To sum up, the relativist if he is intolerant possesses no
public justification for his actions because there is no set of absolute
values to which he can apply by way of justification. Such reasons as
he has for being intolerant satisfy only him or like minded men and he
expects no one else to think him justified. Moreover, in being intolera-
ant he acts in no interest but his own interest or the interest of his
group or society. Indeed, he is aware that his intolerance does a dis-
service to those of whom he is intolerant. The absolutist on the other
hand has a public justification, a justification which he is convinced
all men ought to recognize as being valid. In addition, those of whom he is intolerant ought, in his view, to be thankful that they are being kept to the straight and narrow. The reason why relativists are likely to be more tolerant than absolutists should now be clear.

This analysis, incidentally, answers Kupperman's final objection to relativism that the relativist is required to be tolerant to a fault. Clearly he would be no relativist if he were, for he would be obeying a categorical imperative of the form 'always be tolerant'. But he would not wish, for instance, to tolerate those who were intolerant of him, although in being more tolerant than people are wont to be he may thus induce them to perceive the value of tolerance. However, there is a limit, even for someone who is a relativist. The position of the relativist in relation to tolerance is, therefore, that tolerance is for him a general disposition, but there are circumstances when this disposition would be superseded by the principle of self-preservation, or of preservation of one's family, or friends, or nation, for example.

My conclusion, therefore, is that the arguments of Westermarck and Taylor for ethical relativity are persuasive. It follows from this that I am persuaded that there are no absolute values; that there is no universal court of appeal to which moral judgements may be submitted, to determine their truth or falsity. Further, I have concluded, with Kupperman, that relativism does promote tolerance.
The most important contribution of Westermarck to moral education is his persuasive argument to show that moral values are not objective. For if moral values are not objective, a number of problems are posed for the educator. An absolutist approach is, at least logically, untenable: being moral cannot be taken to be acting in accordance with certain supposed absolute values.

Westermarck's predecessors among ethical relativists had not argued their case in such a way as to convince very many people. In Leviathan, Hobbes can scarcely be said to have argued the matter at any length and his conclusions became the target of many thinkers in the years following his death. David Hume, although a great social success, cannot be said at least until very recently to have achieved a corresponding success in the field of academic philosophy. He twice unsuccessfully applied for vacant chairs in Edinburgh and Glasgow. His failure to obtain recognition was, according to Cavendish, on account of 'the contempt for religious dogma which pervades everything he wrote' and his scepticism which 'is always shocking and incomprehensible to those who have no natural inclination towards it'. Such fame as Hume won for himself, therefore, rested mainly upon his historical works and partly upon his attractive and magnetic personality. Although his philosophical reputation now ranks among the great, his ideas have not yet penetrated much beyond academic circles.

By contrast, Westermarck's work has had a considerable effect upon the attitudes of even quite ordinary people in the last half century. Nevertheless, his first book on ethical relativism could not, in 1906, have been published at a less auspicious moment. For G.E. Moore's

1 David Hume - A.P. Cavendish p.11
2 ibid p.11
'Principia Ethica' came out three years before and delivered what seemed at the time to be a crushing blow to all naturalistic theories of ethics. Since then Frankena, Baumrin, Gautier and Monro among others have shown that naturalism is still profitable and legitimate so long as the naturalist does not assert that he is defining moral words such as 'good' in accordance with the precise idea of 'definition' which Moore had in mind. In addition to the formidable difficulty presented to Westermarck by the simultaneous appearance of Moore's work, the philosophical temper of the times was, at the end of the Victorian era, predominantly objectivist and intuitionist. And this ethos was to remain owing to the commanding presence of Moore, for the next thirty years, on the philosophical scene.

Westermarck was confronted, therefore, with the same difficulties as his relativistic forebears. For relativism, when it has not been thought to be intuitively wrong, has seemed to many to be so inconvenient as to necessitate its rejection. The mountain of evidence, however, which Westermarck assembled to demonstrate the diversity of morals together with the impressive scholarship which this involved caused many people to regard favourably his first book on ethical relativism, at least as an anthropological and sociological investigation. Anthropologists and sociologists who read his work were certainly influenced by his philosophical arguments, by his concern for tolerance and by his rational approach to moral problems as opposed to an authoritarian and intuitive approach. Ruth Benedict, for instance, explicitly refers to Westermarck in 'Patterns of Culture' and argues a point of view with which he was very much in agreement. The writings of Melville Herskovits reflect the influence of Westermarck, as do the papers read in 1955 at a symposium entitled "Ethical Relativity in the light of
recent developments in Social Science". Some of these, notably that by Clyde Kluckhohn, have been mentioned already. By the nineteen forties, ethical relativity in one form or another was widely accepted by the majority of social scientists and during the succeeding years it has so far permeated the citizenry as to have caused an absolutist, Judith Jarvis, writing in 1958, to begin an article with the words: "The notion that there are absolutes in morals is unpopular today". One reason for this is the growth of social sciences as an academic discipline and consequently the large numbers of students who have been influenced by them during the last forty years and have in their turn influenced others. The social sciences, and especially anthropology, are partly responsible for the growing belief that there are no moral absolutes. As one of the first social scientists, Westermarck must be regarded as influential in promoting this belief.

One of Westermarck's achievements is, therefore, that he is one of the progenitors of the movement from the belief in moral absolutes towards an acceptance of the relativity of moral values. What lay behind his success, when his predecessors had failed to make ethical relativity credible, was the fact that he was supremely qualified in a way that they had not been. For he was at the same time an anthropologist, a sociologist and philosopher. It will be recalled that Westermarck was for many years simultaneously professor of sociology in London and of moral philosophy in Helsingfors. The protean scope of his scholarship enabled him not only to collate the abundant anthropological data then available and to present it in a convincing manner but also to produce, with the aid of Adam Smith's theory of the moral sentiments and Darwin's

1 Journal of Philosophy Vol. 55 p.1043

2 The first chair in social anthropology was the honorary professorship at Liverpool held by Sir James Frazer in 1908, although the subject has been taught at Oxford since 1884, at Cambridge since 1900 and at London since 1908. Westermarck's 'History of Human Marriage' was published in 1891.
theory of evolution, an account of how moral ideas originated and how they developed. One of the difficulties which ethical relativism had always faced was that of explaining how men came to be moral. Because of the range of his knowledge, Westermarck was able to attempt a resolution of this problem. Moreover, his philosophical skill enabled him to argue against absolutism as it appears in the writings of such as Kant, Sidgwick and Mill and in his second book on ethical relativism successfully to repel his contemporary critics such as Moore and Rashdall. Westermarck achieved what a sociologist or an anthropologist or a philosopher alone could not do, being insufficiently equipped. His success in having relativism adopted by many people derives, therefore, from his masterful eclecticism.

Westermarck's account of moral judgements stresses their emotional origin. Nevertheless, he thought that moral progress had taken place and his criteria for progress in morals was the extent to which moral judgements had been influenced by reason. Moral progress can only take place, he thought, if men exercise their reason in making moral judgements. He was, therefore, a rationalist as well as an emotivist. Indeed, in dispensing with moral absolutes he is in effect holding the door open to reason. While people living with an absolutist moral code typically apply principles or rules without reflection, according to Westermarck they should, on the contrary, continually reflect upon the question of whether these principles still apply in the present context. He showed that a rule or principle was often applied long after circumstances had so changed as to have rendered it obsolete; and that moral judgements were often based on mere aversion (homosexuality was one of his examples). An action was in his view to be judged wrong if it caused harm and the exercise of reason was required to determine whether harm
had been caused or not.

In his understanding of what it is to be moral Westermarck was, in 1900, ahead of his time, stands in the rationalist tradition and predates such people as Hare and Sartre. For both of these men, the principal ingredient of being moral is decision, not, as it would be to an absolutist, submission. Whereas to R.M. Hare, for example, to be moral is to make decisions of principle, to decide which principle should apply, the absolutist, by contrast, must merely apply the absolutes of his moral code. The absolutist has no decisions to make, he has only to obey his moral code.

Although Westermarck takes more cognisance of social customs, there is no doubt that his view of morality is not dissimilar to Hare's. However, he is nearer to Dearden who argues that Hare and Sartre are at fault in regarding choice or decision as sufficient conditions for behaviour to be called moral. Dearden argues that some sort of justification for one's choice must be capable of being given for such a choice to be a moral one. In his enthusiasm for 'reflection' in morals, Westermarck is clearly in agreement with this view. The moral agent, for Westermarck, is in the position of subscribing to the values of his society while not being uncritical of them. The values of society are embodied in him but he continually reflects upon the question of whether they still apply or whether they are not invalidated by new contexts and new conditions.

Such a view is certainly to be contrasted with the absolutist position with its emphasis upon blind obedience to its moral absolutes. To be a practising catholic or communist, for instance, is for many people to submit without reflection or criticism to the moral values and injunctions which form the dogma of the catholic church or the communist party,

1 The Philosophy of Primary Education p.156
as the case may be. Westermarck thought that such uncritical submissiveness was not by any means the essence of the moral life and that, indeed, this was one of the principal sources of intolerance.

The researches of the psychologists during the last thirty years have shown him to be correct. The famous study of the authoritarian personality by Else Frenkel-Brunswik in 1950 and other work by McGranaghan, Kardiner, Wayne and others have shown that prejudiced people are uncritical of themselves or of their parents, that they display rigidity and show a tendency towards dichotomisation of their conceptions of sex roles and of kinds of people and of values. Moreover, prejudiced people manifest projection. While they idealise themselves and their parents and uncritically accept the values of their parent group a balance is maintained by projecting anger and aggression outwards to other people, especially to others who are different in some way. In so doing they demonstrate their allegiance to the parent group, and preserve the stability of that group by releasing aggression elsewhere. It is rather like the child who is kept in check by strict discipline in one classroom and who gives vent to all his frustrated and repressed aggression in another classroom where such strictures are not so much in evidence.

Westermarck was one of the first intellectuals to provide a theoretical background for tolerance. In showing that there are no moral absolutes he has demonstrated that the mere fact of people having different values from ours does not entitle us to be intolerant of them. In this respect he may be viewed as a prime mover in a more general liberalising process which has been sweeping the country during this century. One of the sources of this process has been the work of philosophers and social scientists who have supplied insights into the status of values. Westermarck's contribution to such insights has been considerable.
The direct implications of Westermarck's work are significant. There is a common assumption among teachers that unless moral values are regarded as being absolute that the young will have no respect for them. Consequently, the very idea that moral values are relative is enough to strike fear into some hearts. Westermarck himself was not afraid. As has been said, he contrived, in spite of his relativism, to believe in moral progress and in the value of reason in morals. The advantage of relativism was that it promoted tolerance. However, there is a widespread fear on the part of absolutists that relativism leads to revolution and rootlessness and that absolutism leads to order, stability and a sense of purpose. In short, some people think that unless morality is absolute, moral education will become impossible. For to educate children in values which have no objective validity is, they think, impracticable.

There is little doubt that Westermarck has contributed to the existence of our so-called 'permissive society' with its plurality of values. Relativism does permit more latitude in behaviour. According to an absolutist moral code there is only one way to behave. In a relativistic one, however, how one should behave depends upon one's values, the values of society and the context. There is no one way to behave, no one way to live, no one solution to any moral problem. This means, of course, that others may behave differently from oneself: they may not value work, for instance, and may 'drop out' or they may value noisy and disruptive demonstrations as a means of protest. This makes life more difficult for those of us who do value work and who are averse to noisy disruptive demonstrations. Yet mere aversion does not constitute grounds for being intolerant. Moreover, aversion appears to be the main source of intolerance which some people manifest in condemning certain aspects of
permissiveness such as unusual forms of dress, long or short hair styles, promiscuous sexual behaviour and taking soft drugs such as 'pot'. If these cause no one any harm it is difficult to imagine what grounds can be offered for their condemnation.

It is an unfortunate fact that some people cannot face the possibility that people who differ from them are not 'wrong' or inferior but are entitled to be different. Perhaps, the problem is that these people suffer from what Fromm has called 'the fear of freedom'. They are not free themselves and they cannot tolerate those who seek or appear to be free. They are hidebound by a complex system of rules and shackled to their moral absolutes. Yet in our society a plurality of standards can be witnessed. Moral absolutes have ceased to occupy any part of the moral system of many people. The effect of this diversity of moral behaviour upon the young should not be underestimated. They observe that there are many ways to live. To try to tell them, as an absolutist would, that there is only one right way to live is, therefore, otiose. The legacy of Westermarck's relativism, indeed of modern times, when relativism is gaining ground, is to face the moral educator with the necessity of constructing an educational framework which recognises and takes account of it.
If there are no absolute values, the major defect of an absolutist moral education is that it rests on a mistake. For there is no logical justification for the teacher behaving as if the values of his society or of his group are objective and he is not entitled to behave as if they were the only 'true' values or that they are superior to different systems of values. Nor is he entitled to propagate the view that moral judgements are true and false and that his absolutes supply the sole criterion of such truth and falsity. Indeed, if teachers did not behave as if their values were absolute and if they did not thereby disparage other value systems (one cannot be an absolutist without maintaining that contrary value systems are inferior) there would be a welcome diminution in intolerance and prejudice. For, as has been said, one of the major causes of intolerance is the belief 'that our values are right so yours (being different) are wrong and we shall convert you to ours'. The manner of the conversion has varied from well meaning missionaries, who have sometimes brought with them such mixed blessings as diseases which have wiped out the very people they sought to save, to the extreme of the Holy Inquisition which operated on the principle 'adopt the true faith or die'. When attempts at conversion have failed, dialogue has broken down and the absolutist factions have lived in an uneasy peace in which each continually disparages the other. The present troubles in Ulster are such a legacy of attempts in the past of one faction attempting to convert or destroy the other. The racial prejudice which pervades many societies is another example. Other races are thought to be bad or inferior merely because they are different.
Fear certainly plays its part in promoting continuing strife between racial and religious groups, just as it is a part of any conflict whatever. Yet, if catholics and protestants did not think themselves superior to each other and if, instead, they merely regarded each other as worshipping the same god in a different but not inferior or immoral or heretical way, then the problems they face would disappear. This sense of superiority and of the heretical and immoral character of the other religion is inculcated and perpetrated by the churches themselves. Until recently catholics were not permitted to worship in a Protestant Church: it was therefore immoral to do so. Orangemen, led by Protestant Churchmen flaunt their supremacy over the Catholics in parades which celebrate an old victory that should have been forgotten. And in so doing provoke the resentment of catholic on-lookers so that they respond to this suggestion of superiority with stones and bottles.

It is clear that schools are an important cause of ethnocentrism. The source may be a teacher who is an absolutist and who seeks to instil into his pupils the 'right' set of values and in so doing transmits his own prejudices against other sets of values. It may, however, be the policy of the school to ensure that the child becomes a good presbyterian or a good catholic, a good communist or even a good American. In itself this is no bad thing. What is unfortunate and reprehensible is that in order to ensure that the child remains a catholic or a communist or whatever, and does not subsequently abrogate his commitment, there is a tendency to behave as if contrary beliefs were wrong or mistaken.

Ethnocentrism is almost endemic to ideologies. For without the belief that one's own ideology is superior to all others, its potency is reduced and it is more difficult to inculcate in other people. Ideologies derive their strength from the belief that they constitute the 'right' way and
the only way to live.

A reduction in ideological commitment could be expected to cause a reduction in ethnocentrism. There can be no objection to an ideology such as communism with its own system of morality being inculcated so long as other ideologies are not thereby disparaged to reinforce its acceptance. It is this disparagement, sometimes implicit, but more often direct which is at the root of ethnocentrism. Thus is it that the prejudice of one generation is handed on to the next.

As a reason for adopting the values he is attempting to inculcate the teacher is not entitled to say, 'this is the best way to live', or 'this is the right way to live'. He is only entitled to say, 'this is how we live'. He is not entitled to assert that his way of life is the best or that alternatives are inferior. Indeed, if there are no absolute values he is obliged to point out that other people live by different value systems and they are not wrong or inferior because they do so.

A major defect of an absolutist moral education is, therefore, that it produces ethnocentric people. A relativistic one does not, for a relativist cannot maintain that his values are superior to any others. The essence of relativism is that no absolute standard exists with reference to which different value systems can be compared. The relativist can state a preference for his own value system. He can say, 'I am glad that I am a communist'. The reason for this statement might be that he is averse to some of the consequences of living in a modern democracy like the United States. He may be glad that there are no strikes, comparatively few drug addicts, no riots and no political assassinations in his society comparable with the destruction of Martin Luther King and the two brothers Kennedy. Yet the basis of his preference would merely be that he was inculcated with the values peculiar to a communist
state. He may not value the kind of freedom which the ordinary citizen of the United States possesses but which he lacks (freedom of movement, freedom to start a business, freedom to demonstrate against the government). The statement 'I am glad that I am a communist' when made by a relativist conveys the meaning then, 'I have been brought up to accept certain values, having accepted them I am happy as I am. Yet had I been brought up differently I might have different values and be just as happy being a democrat, for instance'. Such a relativistic outlook is not in the least ethnocentric.

A major defect of an absolutist moral education is, therefore, that it produces ethnocentric people. Now the assumption being made here is that ethnocentrism is undesirable. This has been questioned. Kupperman, for example, writes "It is debatable whether it is possible for a society to cherish a set of common values to the extent that they 'give meaning and purpose to group life' without at the same time firmly rejecting some alternative sets of values. If we remain very aware of the acceptance elsewhere of values which are traditionally repugnant to our society, and if relativism promotes a softening of our rejection of these values, then to that extent we arguably are moving further from the conditions for a healthy society". Kupperman is expressing the view that a society cannot be healthy unless it exhibits ethnocentrism. Yet in our own society some people are tolerant of the catholics, communists, atheists, jews, presbyterians etc. who are also members of it. And the health of these tolerant people seems in no way impaired by their lack of ethnocentrism. They may not themselves be catholics, communists or whatever but they do not think themselves or their values any better than those with contrary beliefs and values. What is true of these people can in principle also be true of larger groups of

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1 Ethical Knowledge p.79 J.J. Kupperman. The inset is from 'Culture and Behaviour' one of a collection of essays by Clyde Kluckhohn Ed. by Richard Kluckhohn p.297.
people, such as races or religious groups or nations. If some people can be tolerant and yet remain healthy why cannot whole societies of men be tolerant and yet remain healthy? However, even if relativism did lead to a less healthy society, this is greatly to be preferred to the possible extinction of large numbers of the society and of its neighbours because of its ethnocentrism. This assumes, of course, that to be unwell but alive is better than to be healthy but facing death or disaster.

Racial and religious prejudice are among the most serious problems of modern life. If they are to be resolved, ethnocentrism must disappear. Education has a great responsibility in this respect. Absolutism must disappear from our schools. If this happens we shall also be resolving the problem of ethnocentrism in the home. For this generation are the parents of the next generation.

It might be objected to the foregoing that if the problem is merely that people are ethnocentric why not inculcate tolerance as if it were an absolute? Apart from the fact that, if there are no absolutes, such action would be logically unjustified, the inculcation of any absolute whatever is undesirable. 'Absolutism', Dearden has written, 'is gratifyingly simple and straightforward, but at the cost of rigidity, insensitivity, and an even immoral refusal to countenance the unfortunate nature of some of its consequences.' In an age when changes occur ever more rapidly and people increasingly have to adapt to new situations and new conditions, flexibility and adaptability are at a premium. Rigidity is unhelpful in a constantly changing world. This is also an age of population explosion. People are having to live together at close quarters in ever larger numbers. Thus insensitivity is accordingly to be avoided. However desirable some of them may be therefore, absolutes cannot be inculcated since they may be expected to cause rigidity and insensitivity quite apart from their terrible consequences in practice.

1 The Philosophy of Primary Education p.173
Moreover, absolutism may be expected to promote anxiety in situations involving moral conflict. For it is a characteristic of absolutism that there is not one absolute but several and more than one may impinge on a given situation. Indeed in any but the simplest situations in which there is no moral problem at all we find absolute values in collision. "Whatever interpretation we finally put on it, the very essence of the moral life lies in deciding which ideal or principle must be given up when the facts make it impossible for them all to be satisfied. Is it better, if you live in a poor society with a high birthrate, to encourage contraception or acquiesce in starvation? The fundamental weakness of the absolutist position is that it prevents us from thinking out a problem like that. When, as constantly happens, the facts of the world bring our principles into contradiction, then the absolutist either must pretend that the problem does not exist, which is caprice in disguise, or else must qualify at least one of his principles in such a way as to restore their consistency; he must accept contraception when the alternative is mass starvation, or maintain (if, for instance, he is a catholic) that starvation is the lesser of two evils.

"But absolute principles, in the nature of the case, cannot be qualified. What therefore happens under the pressure of circumstances is that the absolute values are maintained in principle while expediency rules in practice. Contraception continues to be excluded in principle, but a meaningless distinction is drawn between 'natural' methods, which are permissible, and 'artificial' methods which are not".1

This highlights one of the major defects of absolutism: moral behaviour to an absolutist consists in rigidly adhering to a set of absolute values. Since they are absolute, that is, they always apply to all men in all ages and situations, they cannot be hived off or

1 'Ideologies' - P. Corbett p.91. The brackets are mine.
forgotten about: they always apply. However, in a conflict situation in which more than one absolute is involved, if the moral agent is to act, he must make one of the absolutes at least temporarily supervenient to the others. That is, he is forced to behave for the moment as if the others are not absolutes and do not apply. The absolutist is, therefore, faced with the problem that in order to act he must be immoral in so far as he must fail to apply or reject for the time being some of his moral absolutes.

A hierarchy of values is of course possible in a relativist framework; and the essence of the moral life in such a framework, as Corbett has said, is the ability to choose between moral principles. Since for the relativist these are not absolutes, in a given situation any one can be made to be supervenient to all the others without logical contradiction or unnecessary anxiety. A moral problem for the relativist is necessarily one involving a certain amount of conflict between one possible course of action and another. To say that being moral involves deciding and choosing between the various moral principles which impinge on the problem does not in any way detract from the value of the principles. They themselves are of value because they enable us to act and to appeal to the principles as reasons for acting, as well as to the facts.

One feature which may logically be expected in an absolutist moral education is indoctrination. "Indoctrinating someone", according to White, "is trying to get him to believe that a proposition 'p' is true in such a way that nothing will shake that belief". Typically, the indoctrinator will criticise or disparage contrary beliefs to reinforce those he wishes to implant in the minds of his charges while preventing any attempt to criticise the beliefs he wishes to be accepted. There

1 The Concept of Education - Ed. R.S. Peters p.181
is little doubt that indoctrination is the most efficient way of establishing beliefs in people. For indoctrination is the only method of inculcating beliefs in which there is an avowed intention to make these unshakeable. It is not, therefore, surprising that indoctrination may be expected to be used by absolutists.

Indoctrination is unlikely to form any part of a relativist moral education since the essence of a relativist view of morals is not rigid adherence to absolutes but rather choosing between moral principles. And the capacity for choice cannot be indoctrinated. Only the content of morality can be indoctrinated. The absolutist then has everything to gain and the relativist nothing to gain by indoctrination. Admittedly, the relativist will seek to teach the child to adopt certain rules and to make use of certain moral principles but the capacity for decision will not in the least be augmented by making these unshakeable beliefs. In fact, deciding which principle to apply and which to reject will be made a more difficult task if all his moral principles have for the child the status of unshakeable beliefs. In order to encourage the capacity for making decisions a relativist moral education will commonly rely heavily upon the giving of reasons. Thus reasons will be given for rules and moral judgements in order that the child will learn how to decide. Reasons are inseparable from decisions: any decision has a basis and the basis is the reason for the decision. Moreover, since the principles of the relativist are not absolute the capacity for decision will not have been fully developed until these very principles are themselves the subject of critical thinking. This is not however indoctrination.

One objection which can be raised here is that the sociological relativist may decide to indoctrinate the child with the values of his
society; and this in spite of the fact that moral values are relative and not absolute. If he did so he would necessarily have to imbue the notion in the child that contrary values are inferior, else the indoctrination would not have the desired effect of making the values of his own society unshakeable. Yet the indoctrinator could scarcely do this if he himself did not think that the values of his society were supreme, in which case it is clear that he would not be a sociological relativist at all, but an absolutist in disguise. For to make the claim that the values of one's society are superior to all others is inconsistent with being a relativist, even a sociological one. Indoctrination can only take place if what is being indoctrinated is regarded as superior to all other beliefs of the same class. It is for this reason that relativism, which disavows any basis for such a claim cannot be associated with indoctrination.

It is because absolutist morality consists in the rigid adherence to certain absolute rules that indoctrination is justified by the absolutist. Because, if for the child to become morally adult is meant that he should firmly and rigidly adhere to the supposed moral absolutes, clearly what matters educationally is not how he acquires these absolutes but merely that he does so.

Another reason why indoctrination may be logically expected to be practised by absolutists is that no conclusive arguments, that is, arguments which rely upon objective premises, can be provided to establish their absolute values. Every value judgement depends upon other values and cannot, as some ideologists have supposed, be derived from facts alone. Yet every value can in turn be questioned. Indoctrination may then be expected from the absolutist because what is being indoctrinated dissolves 'at the first touch of critical reflection'. It is impossible to justify an

1 Ideologies - Corbett p.203
absolute value by an objective argument. This means that there is no way of achieving by rational means what the absolutist desires: namely the acceptance of his moral absolutes. Thus to achieve his ends he may be forced to indoctrinate.

The impossibility of providing objective reasons to demonstrate the existence of absolute values has another consequence: that an absolutist moral education may be logically expected to be authoritarian. If the teacher believes himself in possession of the knowledge of what is right and wrong and that this knowledge is objective, there is no necessity for him to give reasons when declaring that some action is right or wrong. For what would be the point of bringing forth other objective facts to support what is already for him an objective fact? That is, why should he give reasons for something which he himself does not question? It is sufficient from the absolutist's point of view merely to assert that that action is right or wrong. Morality, being objective, is in his view like physics. 'Is the length of the line 3 metres?' the teacher asks, and the child can give a definite reply once he has measured it. The question 'why is it 3 metres in length?' is irrelevant in physics (although it is quite relevant in the philosophy of science). Either it is 3 metres or it is not. The absolutist places questions in morals in the same category. The answers are clear cut. The child merely has to apply to the standard consisting of the moral absolutes with which he has been inculcated. No choice is involved. The conclusion is automatic, and certain, and everyone should reach the same answer. This rigidity produces the kind of people of whom R.M. Hare has said that they are 'good intuitionists, able to cling to the rails, but bad at steering round corners'. In the novel situations which change inevitably brings with it such people are ill equipped.

1 The Language of Morals p.75
Relativism cannot logically be expected to be authoritarian because, as has been said, the relativist commonly holds that the essence of being moral is making decisions. To teach a child to be moral is, therefore, to teach him to make decisions for himself. Moreover, the relativist does not hold that only one conclusion is possible. Any moral problem has more than one solution. Niblett is expressing this view when he writes 'An individual act is properly to be called moral only when a man or woman either deliberately chooses to follow convention in spite of a temptation to deviate from it, or decides not to follow convention but chooses instead to do better (or worse) than his society tells him to'.

To sum up: the defects of an absolutist moral education are that it may logically be expected:

(i) to cause ethnocentrism, and especially racial and religious prejudice.
(ii) to cause rigidity, insensitivity and anxiety.
(iii) to rely heavily on indoctrination.
(iv) to be authoritarian.

If Westermarck is correct, and there are no absolute values, there is no excuse for ethnocentric behaviour. Nor can authoritarianism or indoctrination be justified. And if absolutism were to cease, a diminution of rigidity, insensitivity, and anxiety could be expected. Moreover, and most important, more people could be expected to be tolerant, and all the religious and racial strife would at least be considerably lessened.

1 Moral Education in a changing society p.14
As even absolutists such as Kupperman have conceded, tolerance is 'a natural outcome' of accepting a relativistic moral code. A moral education without absolutes will have the effect, therefore, of promoting tolerance among peoples. It also permits the possibility of producing people who are autonomous. That is, people who are self-regulating and self-determining. Absolutism, by contrast, does not produce people who are autonomous. For to be moral in an absolutist sense is to continually obey certain definite moral rules, the moral absolutes. Any violation of these rules is, per se, an immoral action. If he is to be moral, therefore, the absolutist is denied any choice. Indeed, to suggest that the absolutist can choose and yet be moral is a contradiction. In every situation there is for the absolutist a right way to behave, each moral problem has only one solution. He has no choice (if he is to be moral) but to act on that unique solution. The only choice he has then is between being moral or immoral. Far from being autonomous, therefore, the absolutist is in fact a heteronymous being, subservient to the moral rules which govern him.

Admittedly, there are many situations in which the absolutist would claim that he has a choice. Such situations, however, are of the kind to which none of his absolutes apply or are relevant and they are not for him moral situations at all. Any moral context is covered for the absolutist by some absolute or other. In spite of this, some people will still assert that they believe in the existence of certain moral absolutes and yet in some moral contexts they are faced with a choice and the alternatives are all nonetheless moral for their being a choice. Take the case of X who believes that truth-telling is a moral
absolute. That is, he believes that 'all men in all ages should always tell the truth'. Let us suppose another of his absolutes is that no one should ever injure in any way, anyone who is on the point of death. Let us further suppose that X knows that Y, who is dying, has a son who was shot the day before for desertion in wartime. If, just before he dies, Y asks, 'How is my son?' X undeniably has a choice: he can go on telling the truth or he can tell a lie and so save the dying man from further suffering. It is also the case that people readily decide what choice to make. Clearly, however, if he does choose, say, to tell a lie, in so doing he has betrayed his supposed absolute. If truth-telling is an absolute, for him, therefore, he has acted immorally. The fact is, truth-telling is an absolute for very few people, did they but realise it, for situations exist in which most people will tell lies and think themselves moral in so doing. It seems then that many professed absolutists are not really absolutists at all. For thoroughgoing absolutism, as Corbett showed in the last chapter, is too great a burden for most people to bear because of the inevitable collisions which take place between absolute values. Those who are genuinely absolutists, therefore, are not autonomous but heteronymous beings.

Relativism, on the other hand, commonly emphasises choice and decision. The essence of moral behaviour to a relativist is not rigid submission to certain rules but making decisions of principle, that is, deciding which principle among many to apply in a given situation. In a given context the relativist will decide which of his moral principles is to be supervenient to all the others. The important thing is not so much which principle he chooses but merely that he does decide. Such a view of relativism has been given by R.M. Hare and before him, in a more extreme vein, by J.P. Sartre. An individual, for Sartre, commits bad faith (mauvais foi) if he merely follows rules and, indeed, ceases
to be a 'being for himself' and is only 'a being in himself', no better than a tree or a plant.

The distinction between what moral means to an absolutist and what it means to a relativist is commonly the distinction between content and form. To an absolutist, morality consists of moral rules (usually many) and to be moral is to act in accordance with these rules. To a relativist the content is less important than the form. Which principles he employs is less significant than that he makes a decision. The principle that human beings should be sacrificed at certain seasons of the year is not an immoral one to a people who go in fear of a god whose anger, they think, can only be appeased by bloodletting.

Nevertheless, it is conceivable that relativism might not in some cases encourage autonomy. A sociological relativist might argue, with Durkheim, that the most important feature of a moral education is that it should imbue in its children the values of the society, indeed, the values of the 'milieu for which he is specifically destined'. However, a society will change and its morality must change also; sterility and stagnation are the alternatives. New conditions, new environments, new benefits which conceal horrible consequences - all these make a developing morality necessary. Technology has recently brought the problem of pollution into the realm of morals, just as the exploration of space has made us reflect upon the morality of spending millions of dollars on spectacular moon flights when millions of people are dying each year for want of food or medicine. And we must not forget the moral problems caused by releasing untried drugs like thalidomide upon an unsuspecting public. These moral problems have arisen because of change. Morality has had to adapt to change. Indeed, these days a life without change is, to many people, unthinkable. Yet if change is necessary

1 cf p.14
2 Education and Sociology - Emile Durkheim p.71
for the health, growth and development of a society so is some degree of autonomy in its people. For a society is changed by its people; acting perhaps in response to external factors, but nonetheless it is changed by them. And if they are bound indissolubly to tradition, where are the agents of change to come from? Who is to make the changes, if no one is autonomous? 'Education', wrote Durkheim, 'is above all the means by which society perpetually recreates the conditions of its very existence'. This existence depends upon originality in the realm of morality just as in other realms. But originality is inconceivable without autonomy. Even the most extreme sociological relativist, therefore, must encourage the development in the child, at least to some degree, of autonomy.

In arguing that originality is required in the realm of morality as well as in other realms such as, for example, industry and government, to continually amend and improve these it is being suggested that moral progress cannot take place unless there are autonomous individuals who, because of their insight and detachment, can see that some moral rules are obsolete or that new moral rules need to be created owing to the changed conditions within society. Or are we so complacent as to think that, in regard to morals, we have presently attained the Omega point? If not, if our morality is not held to be perfect for our requirements (and who could doubt it?), we must encourage originality in the realm of morals. Yet, whether one believes in moral progress or in an Omega point - and certainly no compelling criteria exist for the one, just as no compelling arguments exist to establish the other - one certainty is that society will change. New conditions of living, new discoveries and new catastrophies will necessitate changes in morals. The rigid class structure of Victorian England (among other things) imposed a rigid and,

1 ibid p.123
2 cf. Teilhard de Chardin
to our eyes, repressive moral code upon society. Living in a world which will be almost inconceivably populous will produce new obligations and new duties. It may soon be immoral to have more than a small number of children, and those who transgress may suffer the same condemnation as a Victorian father would have vented upon a street prostitute while he proudly marched past with his dozen or more offspring.

While relativists commonly assert that the making of a decision is more important in moral behaviour than the nature of that decision or, to put it another way, that form is more important than content, it must not be assumed that a relativistic morality takes no account of content or is somehow devoid of it. Moral principles constitute the content of morality. They are the distillations of generations of experience. They have evolved through the ages and have been found by successive generations to be valuable in helping people to decide what they ought to do. Hare, and Corbett have both described a moral principle as being 'a provisional line of march'. Moral principles owe their utility to the fact that they suggest lines of approach to certain types of problems and they combine in a hierarchy so that in particular contexts some seem more important to us than others. Without them, we would be unable to decide or to act morally. The teacher best serves his pupils by giving them the distilled experience of his ancestors, by providing them with the available moral principles. For its moral principles are 'the most priceless heritage that any generation can leave to its successors.... the building is the work of many generations, and the man who has to start from the beginning is to be pitied; he will not be likely, unless he is a genius, to achieve many conclusions of importance any more than the average boy, turned loose without instruction upon a desert island, or even in a laboratory, would

1 The Language of Morals p.62
2 Ideologies p.94
be likely to make any of the major scientific discoveries'.

Simply to be aware of some moral principles, however, does not make a person moral. He can only be moral if he can act upon them, if he can decide what he ought to do. What we ought to do 'if we are sensible, is to give him a solid basis of principles, but at the same time ample opportunity of making the decisions upon which these principles are based and by which they are modified, improved, adapted to changed circumstances, or even abandoned if they become entirely unsuited to a new environment'.

A moral education should, accordingly, do two things: somehow provide the child with the common stock of society's moral principles, and give him the opportunity to make decisions of principle. Now, how are they to be provided? In practice, the child receives his principles in the course of growing up. He constantly observes moral principles working in the society around him. His parents, his teachers and his peers in their daily lives continually make use of moral principles. Of the three the greatest influence is probably that of the parents. According to Freudians the moral development of the child is thought to be 'largely complete by the age of five years'.

More recent work, however, by Kohlberg indicates that it may not be complete until the late teens. However this may be, it is certain that some parents abrogate their responsibility towards the child and do not provide him with a 'solid basis of principles'. This makes it all the more important for the child's sake that the teacher should play his part in providing the child with the moral principles of his society or, to put it another way, with the prevailing social morality. As Lord James had pointed out, the social morality is something which

1 The Language of Morals p.76
2 ibid p.76
4 In an Essay in 'Authority in an Industrial Society'
the child wishes to acquire, he wishes to learn how people should behave in his society. The teacher is there, among other reasons, to answer this question. The answer may be implicit from the teacher's behaviour, from the way of life that he projects. More than implicit teaching is called for, however, if autonomy is to be achieved in the child. Discussions about moral problems are necessary so that the mechanics of decision making can be observed. And where the teacher has made a moral judgement which affects the child, reasons should be given for it. Even the child in the primary school should be given reasons for moral judgements. As Aristotle pointed out long ago, one of the things which should be done for the child is that he should be encouraged to develop habits which are useful in his society. If the child, when he is morally adult, is going to be expected to give reasons for his moral judgements, he is more likely to do this if he has been accustomed at an early age to hear other people (especially teachers) give reasons for their moral judgements.

Peters and others such as Dearden have stressed the importance of giving reasons for moral judgements. This is what is involved in having a rational moral code. But what is to count as a reason? Clearly, for example, 'because it is the time of the full moon' is not a reason that Peters would accept as a reason for any moral judgement of his. He might on the other hand, be prepared to accept as a reason 'because the property of others should be respected' or 'because telling lies is wrong'. Yet in some primitive societies 'because it is the time of the full moon' is precisely the kind of reason that might be given to justify certain moral decisions. Indeed, the anthropologist may say to the native that this is not a sufficient reason for his action. But the latter may reply that, on the contrary, it is the white man's
reasons which are inadequate. This highlights the point made in a recent lecture \(^1\) by Trevor-Roper that 'what is rational in one culture may not be in another'. In his book on the Azande, Evans-Pritchard states that it is pointless to argue that the beliefs of the native are irrational. They are rational in the context of his cosmology, his weltanschauung.

To say that a moral code should be rational, then, is to say no more than that reasons should be given for moral decisions and that these reasons should be in accordance with the contemporary weltanschauung of the society. In giving reasons for moral judgements the teacher is showing the child what is admissible in his society as rational behaviour, that reasons of this sort will be acceptable to its members. The reasons themselves will commonly be the moral principles which are working in the society or the facts of the matter upon which the judgement is being made.

No understanding of moral education would be complete without mentioning the activities of the child psychologists. Piaget has found that between the ages of four and eight years the child passes through a heteronymous stage. At this time, the child is subject to the law of authority, his respect for which 'causes him to regard adult rules as sacred, unchangeable things. Moral wrongness is defined in terms of adult sanctions; acts that are wrong are the acts that adults punish. Duty is understood as obedience to authority'. \(^2\) His 'intellectual limitations in conjunction with his respect for authority cause him to conceive of wrongdoing in highly literal, objective terms without regard to intentions, to believe that moral values are absolute and universal'. \(^3\) If Piaget is correct, it seems that the child, come what may, will be an absolutist during this period. During this stage it

\(^1\) 'Witch Beliefs and the Witch Craze' - given at the University of Edinburgh in May 1971.
\(^2\) Social Psychology - R. Brown p.403
\(^3\) ibid p.403
may not help the child in the least to lead him towards an acceptance of the relativistic nature of morality. If he is learning to follow rules reasons should, as always, be given for these but no purpose is likely to be served by doing much else.

The teacher's main function should be to help the child to progress beyond this stage to the next, autonomous, stage. At this level 'moral conceptions become psychological rather than objective, relative rather than absolute, and subject to change by group agreement'. Perhaps what has characterised the absolutist in the past is that his development has been retarded in some way so that he has been unable to achieve this relativistic and autonomous stage.

One way to help the child in this respect is to initiate, especially with secondary school pupils, class discussions of moral problems. Moreover, in regard to the rules which the child is bound to follow in the school not only should reasons be given for these but the rules themselves should be the subject of discussion.

Are they repressive, desirable or necessary? Should they be changed? Why should they be changed? What if anything should replace them? If the child is being encouraged to be autonomous such questions as these continually deserve to be asked of him.

Kohlberg's work has suggested that the moral development of the child may continue into the late teens. It might be of value, therefore, with pupils in the sixth year, to study moral systems other than their own, to question their own moral judgements (whatever they may be) in a tutorial context and to investigate with them the question of moral values in general.

The function of the teacher in a moral education without absolutes is to provide the child with the common stock of moral principles,

1 ibid p.404
taking the line not that they are absolutes to be adhered to at all costs for that course leads to rigidity, insensitivity, anxiety and ethnocentrism with all its terrible consequences; but that they are the principles of his society and they constitute part of the way of life of that society. This is not a compelling argument for the child adopting our way of life. It is however a reason for so doing that he is himself a member of that society. In the course of adopting the principles of his society it is to be hoped (as Piaget says does happen,1) that the child will transform them, and modify them and make them his own. "Unless our education has been so thorough as to transform us into automata, we can come to doubt or even reject these principles; that is what makes human beings, whose moral systems change, different from ants whose 'moral system' does not."2 His function is also to encourage autonomy, for the alternative is heteronomy and what crimes has it to answer for? (Blind obedience, which is the lot of the heteronomous being, has produced among others the Holy Inquisition,3 and the nazis). In being autonomous, the adult can more easily adapt to his ever changing environment and perhaps cease to make some of the mistakes of his parents, and their forebears. In being tolerant, though not to a fault, he will contribute to a more harmonious way of life, one with less suffering, less misery and in which everyone is free to 'do his own thing' so long as he does not thereby prevent anyone else from doing likewise.

1 Social Psychology - R. Brown p.404
2 The Language of Morals - R.M. Hare p.74
3 In a History of Latin America, J.E. Fagg writes of the Holy Inquisition "Unfortunate persons convicted of being Protestants, Jews or Moslems - and therefore traitors (to the true faith) - were usually sentenced to death unless they recanted, in which case the penalty was imprisonment". p.242 The phrase in brackets is mine.
Are moral values objective? This is the question which is considered in the first half of this essay. By 'objective' is meant: having 'a real existence apart from any reference to a human mind, that what is said to be good or bad, right or wrong cannot be reduced merely to what people think to be good or bad, right or wrong'. The work of Westermarck and others has been brought to bear on this question. The conclusion reached is that moral values are not objective but that they are contingent upon such factors as culture and context.

The principal arguments by which this conclusion has been reached are as follows:

1. The diversity of morals shows (a) that it is at least not self-evident that there is only one correct set of moral values by which all men should be judged; for an indispensable condition for a proposition to be self-evident is that it should provoke universal assent.

   (b) that moral values are not objective if by objective is meant 'what would provoke universal assent'.

2. Westermarck has shown how ethical predicates such as good, bad etc. may be ultimately based upon the moral emotions of approval and disapproval. If this be accepted, then moral values have an emotional basis and have evolved as man himself has evolved. Thus moral values are contingent upon the nature of men, upon the culture in which they have grown up and the contexts in which they have found themselves.

3. Any moral judgement has an emotive flavour and involves a unique intensity of approval or disapproval. No two moral
judgements are, therefore, ever identical (though they may be similar). Strict uniformity of moral judgements is, therefore, impossible: different people cannot be expected to make the same moral judgement. What is good or bad, right or wrong can, accordingly, be reduced to what people think to be good or bad, right or wrong.

4. No compelling arguments (i.e. arguments which are not 'culture bound') can be given to show that the different moral values of other peoples are morally erroneous.

The conclusion that moral values are not objective but relative to culture and context has an important social consequence: those who believe that there is no one right way to live are likely to be more tolerant than those like the absolutists who believe that there is one way to live (embodied in their absolute values) which is right for all men in all ages. That is, relativism promotes tolerance.

Some of the implications for education of ethical relativity are:

1. If there are no absolute values (i.e. if there are no moral values which are objective), an absolutist moral education is logically unjustified. The teacher is not entitled to propagate the view that his values or the values of his group (e.g. communist, catholic, protestant, white South African) are superior to those of others, or are the only 'right' ones. If absolutism were held to be correct, the teacher would be entitled to encourage his pupils to be ethnocentric.

2. An absolutist moral education (the essence of which is the inculcation of one set of moral values which are held to be superior to all others) may logically be expected:

   (1) to rely on indoctrination: for if to be moral is merely to
act in accordance with moral absolutes then all that need concern the educator is that they are inculcated. Indoctrination is the most efficient method.

(2) to rely on authoritarianism: the absolutist moral educator regarding, as he does, moral values as objective thereby accords them the status of facts which he himself does not question. He is, therefore, unlikely to give reasons for things that he regards as unquestionable.

(3) to cause rigidity, insensitivity and anxiety: the absolutist is continually in the invidious position of having to decide between conflicting absolutes e.g. birth-control or mass starvation. Yet absolutes cannot be hived off. They are supposed to apply always.

(4) to cause ethnocentrism (especially race and religious prejudice): if one's own values are held to be absolute i.e. apply to all men everywhere in all ages then contrary values are 'wrong' and inferior or heretical.

(5) to cause war, bloodshed and strife: if other people are regarded as heretical their conversion (or their extermination if heresy is an offence against the 'true' god) may be regarded as a duty. Equally if they are held to be inferior, their subjugation and persecution may be thought to be a right.

If absolutism is untenable, and that is the substance of this thesis, then a moral education which is absolutist should cease to be practised; and a reduction in absolutism in moral education should provoke a diminution in its various defects. Chief among these is ethnocentrism. If absolutism were to disappear from schools people could be expected to be on the
whole more tolerant.

3. Absolutism tends to promote heteronomy while relativism tends to promote autonomy. Moral progress cannot take place without autonomous people. For autonomy is a prerequisite of originality. Thus the acceptance of relativism provides for the possibility of moral progress in a way that absolutism does not.
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