



# Metaethical Relativism

Isidora Stojanovic  
Institute Jean-Nicod, Paris

Abstract: Although relativism may be said to be one of the oldest doctrines in philosophy, dating back to the teachings of Protagoras in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., when it comes to contemporary philosophy, there is no consensus on what makes a view qualify as "relativist". The problem is particularly acute in metaethics, since most of the views that up to a decade ago were described as "relativist" would be more accurately described as "contextualist" or even "expressivist" in light of the distinctions currently drawn in philosophy of language and semantics. I will begin the lecture by introducing the core relativist ideas in an informal way, and will warn against possible misinterpretations. I will then distinguish two construals of relativism: the "metaphysical" construal, based on the idea that there is no single, absolute, universal morality, and the "semantic" construal, based on the idea that the truth value of moral claims is relative to a set of moral standards, or moral practices, or some other suitable parameter. The aim of the lecture is to show that metaethical relativism, a view often dismissed all too easily as implausible, actually provides a promising account of morality and moral discourse.

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