

# Lifting the Veil of Relativism

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*This paper argues that relativism prevents discourse, positive interaction and the growth of understanding since relativism eliminates the possibility of doubt and, subsequently, reason. Conversely, pluralism supports the concept of a universal moral claim in that we can only understand a fragment of the universe, but through dialogue, can advance towards greater understanding. This approach allows human beings in a multicultural society to move away from bigotry toward understanding and create a “we” rather than an “us” and “them” mentality. A continued claim of the validity of relativism would only hinder this process. In a more positive vein, we will also try to review some logical and pragmatic arguments that suggest how relativism can be overcome and universal moral rules can be defended without hindering pluralism.*

## Introduction: relativism defined

In attempting to refute relativism, it has frequently been argued that relativism refutes itself. In other words, if relativism in a relative world can only be one of the many possible truths, it in effect renders itself relative. We argue here that this critique of relativism, although true, is by far neither the only nor necessarily the strongest refutation that should be used. There are several other challenges that relativism faces and a careful critique and consideration is therefore necessary to discuss these challenges.

First, we must consider what relativism is. Relativism, *lato sensu*, is not a singular philosophical doctrine. Instead, it encompasses a family of doctrines, all considering “that a central aspect of experience, thought, evaluation, or even reality is somehow relative to something else” (Swoyer 2014). Relativist doctrines depend on the individual’s perspective, because no object corresponds to judgments, preferences, emotions or worldviews of a man or a group, so it makes no sense to speak of truth or falsehood (Cf. Berlin 1990/2013. 80).

A comprehensive set of categorical definitions can be found by breaking relativism down into two main categories, namely, that of a ‘moral doctrine’ and ‘metaethical doctrines’ (Tännsjö 2007. 124). Within the metaethical kinds of relativism, there are positive and negative forms of relativism. The negative forms are “nihilistic” since “there is no moral truth...there exist no moral facts...there are no moral propositions whatever” (Tännsjö 2007. 124). The positive forms include semantic, epistemic

and ontological moral relativism, all of which posit that there are many moral truths (Tännsjö 2007. 125).

Relativist motifs often rely on the foundation of a “truistic” (Swoyer 2014) premise. This foundation claims that a thing may be true within a certain context – or framework – and that the same thing may be false within another historical context, that it can be true or false for some groups and in some historical periods, but not for others. Truth is relative to a framework of concepts, norms or practices: “truth is relative because meaning is contextual and being is relational” (Taylor 1978. 41). Different individuals may still come to differing conclusions since they “inhabit different moral (socially constructed) universes” (Tännsjö 2007. 125). Even the narrowing of relativism as an umbrella term to focus on modern relativism, it is still a broad term that encompasses many different strands of thought and different fields, including: cultural relativism, political relativism, scientific relativism and moral relativism (Swoyer 2014). Whether looking at positive or negative relativism, there is no universal objective truth. All forms of relativism rely on social construct and historical context as determinants of an individual’s perspective.

Relativism is important in discussions across various disciplines today, because morals have become a part of a theory of good instead of belonging to the sphere of practical action of the agent. In the context of relativism, one’s own morals can only be accurately seen from his/her own first-person perspective, like a policy from the viewpoint of the agent who created it and not an observation of the same policy from a politician in another hemisphere, or an observer from Mars. An individual decides what is right or wrong from the context of his/her own framework, but because there are many truths, he/she cannot accurately understand another’s moral framework. However, placing morals within a greater theory of good counters this agent-centered viewpoint. Debates concerning relativism have thus arisen in political science, ethics, theology, sociology and even philosophy. Across these disciplines several prominent challenges to relativism have become apparent.

These challenges can be divided into three categories: logical, practical and unexpected consequences. Firstly, analytic challenges dealing with self-refutation and empirical problems create dilemmas for the philosophical possibility of relativism. Secondly, relativism is impractical and virtually impossible in practice concerning policy-making in a multi-cultural society – for example, immigration can add to this impossibility. Thirdly, relativism can lead to unexpected consequences that pose a societal danger by creating a clash of irreconcilable differences between or among cultures that may in fact hamper tolerance and deter peace.

## Logical challenges

A common critique of relativism, only briefly touched on here, is that relativism simply refutes itself. If everything relies on social constructs and historical context then moral relativism as a theory is a product of Western society in a post-war, twentieth century historical framework. It follows that relativism might be true for post-war twentieth century society but cannot escape losing relevance in other contexts and eras. Relativism thus faces the problem of being relative. This historical context is integral to relativism and in this particular incarnation it is called historicism. German historicism maintains three conclusions that implicitly lead to complete relativism: 1) it is impossible to define universal norms of conduct, 2) all ethics are expressions of social structures and 3) one cannot rationally define duty, “what to do or want” (Aron 1938/2006, 372). However, historicism is not an isolated declaration; it is a trans-historical vision that exempts itself from the verdict on the precariousness of human thought. Instead it transcends the cycle (Strauss 1953. 25).

A radical, existential historicism, like that of Heidegger, responded to Nietzsche’s denial of the trans-historical nature of the historicist thesis, rejecting any possibility of objective analysis, because all life is commitment.

Philosophy [...] presupposes that the whole is knowable, that is, intelligible. This presupposition leads to the consequence that the whole as it is in itself is identified with the whole in so far as it is intelligible; [...] it leads to the identification of “being” with “intelligible” or “object”; [...] The presupposition mentioned is said to have its root in the dogmatic identification of “to be” in the highest sense with “to be always,” [...] The dogmatic character of the basic premise of philosophy is said to have been revealed by the discovery of history or of the “historicity” of human life. [...] “to be” in the highest sense cannot mean – or, at any rate, it does not necessarily mean – “to be always” (Strauss 1953. 30-31).

It played a key role that radical historicism could deny the trans-historical character of its doctrine. Nietzsche’s attack on nineteenth century historicism shows that historicism devalues all global visions of the world. It creates impossibility because it would destroy the “protecting atmosphere within which life or culture or action is alone possible. [...] The theoretical analysis of life is noncommittal and fatal to commitment, but life means commitment” (Strauss 1953. 26). Followers of historicism define thinking as essentially subservient to life. Such arguments of self-refutation have sprung up again and again in opposing historicism and the various forms of twentieth century relativism.

Self-refutation is not the only problem inherent to relativism. A problem arises from the main root of cultural relativism itself: the conception stating that morality is relative

because it is contextual or a social construct. The radical relativist viewpoint describes the rigidity of frameworks and the paradigms that prevent meaningful communication with ‘Others’ considerably different from ourselves: “we are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language” (Popper 1970. 56). The frameworks in which we are imprisoned are the individual’s environment, the historical context, cultural influences and innumerable other factors. This contextual element creates the framework for an individual to draw conclusions and make moral judgments as to what is right and what is wrong. An inherent problem exists in this framework, namely, “notions of incommensurability appear to rest on the assumption that frameworks are totally closed and unchangeable” (Young 1997. 499).

This closed framework concept is paradoxical. By stating that an individual’s framework is subject to factors such as environment, language, religion and historical experience, cultural relativism admits that human beings are shaped and influenced by their surroundings and time period rather than by a genetically inherited framework. This implies that a radical relativist would agree with the argument that there are in fact “no innate principles or ideas” (Locke 1690/2013. 27-85). By conceding to a *tabula rasa* notion of a newborn human being and that the individual subsequently builds a moral framework according to the surrounding environment and era, the relativist faces a fundamental contradiction. If individuals can be shaped, at what point does the social construction stop; at what point do individuals stop learning from each other? In countering ethnocentrism, moral and cultural relativism do so through a “postmodern retreat from any epistemic judgments. In such a view, it is not possible to speak of cultures ‘learning’ from each other” (Young 1997. 501). But this is inherently impossible if a human being’s moral framework is developed through exposure to other human beings in a specific society.

Discoveries in anthropology and other social sciences – including history – support the idea that no single moral value was ever shared across tribes and civilizations. Strauss summarizes this view by expressing that no examples exist where principles of justice have not been denied in a certain society or culture<sup>1</sup> (Strauss 1953. 9). However, can one deduce the diversity of law from *de facto* diversity? (Aron 1938/2006. 370). The historicist argument impresses us because it presents itself as extremely plausible. The plausibility of historicism comes from the opposition of past dogmas: “No component man of our age would regard as simply true the complete teaching of any thinker of the past. (...) It is reasonable to assume that what has invariably happened up to now will happen again and again in the future” (Strauss 1953. 20-21).

However, the “experience of history” at the base of historical relativism is nothing but a “bird’s-eye view of the history of thought” (Strauss 1953. 22) because historical knowledge is always fragmentary. Instead, rather than legitimizing historicism, history

<sup>1</sup> However, he objects that no one has shown this refusal to always be justified or even reasonable.

itself proves that fundamental themes and problems persist within all philosophical thought. This “unchanging framework” (Strauss 1953. 23) is incompatible both with differences in approach and with the diversity of solutions in different epochs. Only if the responses to these problems were “essentially” (Strauss 1953. 23) contradictory and none of them were greater or more important than another might one infer that we cannot solve any problem in a universally valid manner.

Relativism claims that although natural right must be universally recognized by human reason, the social sciences show that an infinite variety of conceptions of ‘right’ exists. Therefore, there are no immutable principles of justice. An extreme consequence would be to assert that moral decisions are beyond the competence of reason and reason allows for an equal defense of truth and good or misdeeds and atrocious conduct (Strauss 1953. 42). Reason loses its force. If we are capable of passing judgments only inside our own social framework, and all other actions outside of our social construct are relative to their own frameworks, we are unable to truly observe and evaluate these actions or even compare them to others. The basis of relativism is, in fact, more profound, namely, a disbelief in the very possibility of knowledge of what is naturally true or right. Reason presupposes a chance for legitimacy and a possibility for falsehood and doubt. Reason implies that there is some element of doubt that allows us as human beings to observe, question and evaluate before drawing conclusions.

Finally, a simple empirical observation reveals that nobody actually lives his life as if all of his life-choices were of equal moral value or truth-value. Reason and self-evaluation of our own moral frameworks influence our thoughts as to which moral goods or values we personally deem superior or inferior and we consciously or unconsciously rank their importance. This would suggest that even if relativism were logically valid, it was existentially impossible.

All these considerations may appear philosophical and abstract, but now we turn to some practical examples and to the consideration of real unexpected consequences that challenge relativism.

### Practical challenges

It is true that relativists are right to challenge universalist claims and note that “there is value in recognizing that universalism is sometimes a cover for cultural imperialism, that agency is something we struggle for [and] that identity is not as simple as the stories we prefer to tell about our subjective formation” (Young 1997. 498). However, applying these notions to practical policy-making is unrealistic. Domestic policy-making in diverse societies would be difficult, if not impossible, if it relied on the validity of relativism. For example, immigration poses a problem for relativism, because different cultures may clash.

Although we mentioned above that no individual leads his/her life as a true relativist, relativism injects itself into Western discourse particularly through multiculturalism. Immigration today often becomes tied to multiculturalism. The West has become sensitive to multiculturalism due to the history of the first half of the twentieth century. The legacies of the Holocaust, colonization, segregated America and apartheid have all added to the call for tolerance in an increasingly culturally mixed society.

Therefore, several questions arise when dealing with policy-making in diverse societies. First, is it possible to define socially constructed boundaries or are they relative as well? For example, if socially constructed boundaries can be defined by a set of criteria resulting in a variety of significant minorities in a democracy, can legislation be drafted to incorporate immigrant groups, and if it can be, then how? If the government decides that the native culture should determine which legislation should be adopted to enforce what is right in the native culture, cultural domination occurs and the relativist claim to multiple truths is thrown aside. However, without the option to compromise, drafting legislation must rely on the governing culture. If the government were to draft loose legislation that could be interpreted by the various groups living within the state or city, the government would risk facing the problem of a minority group with practices and/or beliefs that were irreconcilable with the governing culture. In this situation, it cannot be upheld that “warrantable judgments across cultural boundaries can never be made, if only because the failure to act is itself an action that may have unacceptable consequences for other people – consequences which are unacceptable to us” (Hatch 1997. 374). That is evidenced that actual political and societal polemics about issues such as arranged or forced marriages, honor killings, acceptability of the physical punishment of children, child labor, headscarves, female driving and requirements of attending school have all been elements in debates in the West. Since there is much literature debating human rights issues as well as controversial actions such as honor killings or practices of female genital mutilation, we will not discuss these issues here. Rather, we have chosen to briefly mention a topic that is possibly more far-reaching and less controversial: education and education policy. Considering the concerns mentioned above, how can a state develop education curricula and policies in a diverse society, especially in minority dominated regions?

By asking this question, it becomes apparent that diverse societies face this challenge even when it comes to less controversial issues like school curricula. We have chosen a mild example for the purpose of demonstrating how this challenge can even arise in something as basic as sports class requirements. For example, in Austria, all students are required to take swimming classes as part of the school sports curriculum and are typically co-educational. With an influx of immigrants from Muslim countries, especially from provincial areas of these countries, this aspect of the education curriculum is being challenged. Should Muslim girls be forced to partake in these swim classes if the co-educational element combined with the required clothing is problematic within

these cultures and moral frameworks? Rather than adopting a relativist viewpoint, the government opts for a compromise by holding that all students are required to learn how to swim and religious exemptions cannot be obtained, but that students can adapt their swimming dress to fit Muslim standards<sup>2</sup>. Similar issues remain a point of debate in several EU countries and they only become more complicated if we are to consider discussing an educational subject such as history, especially as more and more cultural or moral viewpoints enter the spectrum. The more diverse the society is, the greater is the challenge in creating legislation. Relativism does not allow for debates and compromises, since an individual is locked into his/her own framework. Therefore, relativism cannot offer a solution to challenges faced in policy making in diverse societies.

Relativism can result in unexpected consequences. If one is not able to distinguish the truth from what is false, justice from injustice, science cannot proceed to an instrumental analysis that we, generous liberals, decided to use to measure the service of democracy. This leads to potentially disastrous consequences: the hypothesis that because we are not able to examine the ends (since all choices are only blind preferences) but solely the means leads to accepting existential commitment and facing absolute nothingness.

Why simply accept with relief that which leads us to deny what is true, good and just and to receive with respect all cultures that tolerate others? The arguments in favor of tolerance are weakened if the choice of tolerance is only a choice among other possibilities, as blind as any other.

Such a view is supported by three axioms that are seldom discussed: 1) the impossibility of knowing goodness or justice, 2) the passionate rejection of all absoluteness, and 3) the equality of all cultures which have a respect for diversity, without qualification. These axioms apparently silence the voice of reason (Strauss 1953. 6-7).

How can anyone seriously assert that exclaiming that something "is simply part of a group's culture" or "within their values" serves to further justice and continuity? In the nineteenth century the Maori of the North Island of New Zealand conquered the Chatham Islands, inhabited by the Moriori, people of the same origin from a thousand years before. The Maori had adopted a warring culture, whereas the Moriori had adopted a peaceful culture. The Maori, according to their custom, captured and killed the entire population, hunting down any that attempted to flee. The Moriori could have retaliated, but instead prepared a negotiation based on resource sharing. The result was greater carnage (Barry 2002. 253-254). This example brings into question the idea that a world in which all adhere to their own standards would necessarily be peaceful.

There are situations in which ethical relativism is untenable, for it may lead to moral neutrality and inaction in situations that are intolerable.

<sup>2</sup> „Schwimmen, als Teil des Lehrplans, sei grundsätzlich verpflichtend, allerdings nur in der Volksschule. Geschlechtertrennung im Islam spielt jedoch erst ab der Pubertät eine Rolle. Wenn die Eltern dann ihre Töchter vom Turnen oder Schwimmen befreien wollen, reicht eine religiöse Begründung nicht aus.“ – Herrner



Ethical relativism is mistaken when it calls for us to be nonjudgmental in relation to such issues as political executions, genocide, genital mutilations, honor killings, and the like (Hatch 1997. 372).

Acceptance of moral relativism becomes more difficult when claiming that acts of utter violence are simply ingrained within another culture's practices and traditions.

### Pluralism

We argue that by turning to a critical pragmatist-pluralist approach we can address the concerns raised by the challenges to relativism mentioned above, while continuing to recognize that societal and individual differences do exist. Although the process is neither simple nor would we label it as easy, these differences can be bridged and the human learning process does not bluntly halt at some unspecified point in an individual's life.

We are "prisoners caught in the framework of our theories..." (Popper 1970. 56), but it is possible to break out of this framework if we try hard enough. We then find ourselves in a yet bigger framework, out of which we can move with effort. Relativism's claim that individuals cannot learn or talk to one another is absurd since

[relativism] simply exaggerates a difficulty into an impossibility. The difficulty of discussion between people brought up in different frameworks is to be admitted. But nothing is more fruitful than such a discussion; than the culture clash, which has stimulated some of the greatest intellectual revolutions (Popper 1970. 56-57).

Fruitful interaction does not have to be limited to a "culture clash" that results in a scientific or "intellectual revolution" (Popper 1970. 56-7). In fact this concept can be – and has been – taken much further. Fruitful interaction, or dialogue itself, is an integral element of human reason. Whereas radical moral relativism leads to a breakdown of reason,

Dialogue is always dialogue within and at the margins of a tradition, an institutional order, a culture. Immanent critique is immanent to a historical process and its transcendental capacity is incremental. A process of trial and error and intelligent (Dewey's favorite word) adaptation is the way we can transcend contemporary problematics, but this is a perennial process, and transcendence only relative, yet a way of life in a learning society (Young 1997. 500).

Critique and self-critique are necessary elements of human reason. However, ensuring that the critiquing process is meaningful and not superficial requires meaningful interaction. Dialogue does not imply disrobing relativism and replacing it with universalism. Quite the contrary, rather than disregarding cultural and moral differences, a "pragmatic-pluralist" approach "acknowledges the relational – not relativist – character of cultures but allows for intercultural critique" (Young 1997. 501).



This further applies to concepts of functioning communities, democracy and allows for drafting improved legislation. Dialogue becomes more important than finding a unified social framework on which to base laws. Discourse towards a substantive common interest matters and unanimity will not be achieved. Instead, political decisions will always be and should always remain contested (Pitkin and Shumer 1982. 47-48). Although this notion is commonly accepted within democratic pluralism, and it is perhaps an obvious answer to drafting legislation for a diverse society, the dialogical concept plays a role of growing importance in conflict resolution and conflict prevention, and is necessary for continued social learning and mutual understanding that both enable functional societies.

The aim of a dialogue is to reach mutual understanding. This is what separates dialogue from simple conversation. Although many theorists who discuss dialogue would not agree on the details of one another's theories, it is apparent that many can agree on using reason as the basis for dialogue to be able to reach greater understanding. This aim is the basis of all social reason and is supported in different ways by various theorists (Berger 2011. 36, Bernstein 1987. 519, & Verkamp 1991. 103-115).<sup>3</sup> Peter Berger offers perhaps the most realistic theory of dialogue. He puts forth the needed pre-condition and conditions for meaningful dialogue among religious traditions. Although these conditions require that one remain open to the possibility of changing one's own beliefs in a dialogical encounter, this neither means that this is the goal nor the purpose of dialogue. The goal is to create better understanding, which can help bringing about a more sustainable co-existence. Berger's concept for interreligious dialogue can be used as a basis to create dialogue on differences in morals. The pre-condition remains true, in that an individual must be willing to enter into a dialogical exchange. However, some of Berger's conditions only apply to interreligious dialogue. Therefore, to create dialogue on morals, the conditions will slightly differ. First, an individual has to accept the possibility of a change in personal perspective; in entering a dialogue, we might change our own minds. Secondly, it is important that you are able to differentiate the core of your own view from the diversity of peripheral interpretations. Third, much dialogue looks toward reaching areas of agreement. However, this agreement does not imply that an individual loses his faith or his moral framework. Agreement can occur in areas of commonality while still allowing for big differences in individuals' morals<sup>4</sup>. Fourth, the 'Other' should not be

<sup>3</sup> For example, Hans-Georg Gadamer portrays dialogue's aim as the basis of all social reason and despite the lengthy debate between the two, Jürgen Habermas agrees with the essential element of Gadamer's definition of dialogue differentiating between "what he calls "communicative action" that is orientated to mutual understanding from the type of "purposive-rational" action that is orientated toward success" (Bernstein 1987. 519). John Hick's "Copernican Revolution", although controversial and disputed, serves as yet another example of a scholar promoting a theory based on the pretext of human beings using reason to reach greater understanding (Verkamp 1991. 103-115 & Berger 2011. 36).

<sup>4</sup> Dialogue serves to create understanding of the 'Other' and the 'Other's' point of view to improve coexistence. This often relies on finding common ground, but does not imply an implicit adoption of the 'Other's'

seen as an enemy (Berger 2011. 50-82); however, we claim that this condition does not necessarily apply to conflict prevention and resolution. Although the lack of condition four slows the process, thereby creating a smaller initial impact, impact is only achieved through persistence and continuous engagement over many years.

Some elements may, at first glance, seem unsatisfactory to an idealist, namely, that religious fundamentalists and radical relativists will not be found at the dialogical table; fundamentalists and relativists “both embody a rejection of reason – for the pursuit of reason implies both the possibility of truth *and* the legitimacy of doubt” (Berger 2011. 42). However, the plausibility of dialogue under the conditions outlined above is considerably more realistic and applicable to society. This pluralist dialogical approach maintains an element of doubt while addressing the difficulties that relativism presents concerning social change and practical policy application as well as prevention of violence.

Finally, before turning to our conclusion, we will briefly touch upon the possibility of a universal morality within pluralism. Relativism rejects the possibility of a universal morality and universalism because they defend that there are morals shared by all mankind, usually turning to basic human rights – the right to life, shelter, food, etc.

Pluralism handles universal morality differently. Rather than claiming the undeniable existence or absolute impossibility of a universal morality, pluralism presupposes the existence of certain universal morals or values to work. Pluralism assumes respect for expressing one’s views and respect in listening to another’s. Pluralism in this form also assumes a desire to learn, reason and improve, as well as an acceptance of questioning one’s own values, a “belief” in the possibility of doubting. To function, pluralism requires some form of a universal morality for individuals participating within a pluralist society. However, this does not mean that the existence or establishment of a universal morality is probable or even possible. The conditions of pluralism require a willingness of an individual to participate in dialogue and an acceptance of the fact that the individual might change as a result of this dialogue. This naturally eliminates the participation of dogmatists, radical relativists and anyone unwilling to participate in a society based on pluralism. These individuals would not be included in any shared values or morals that are prerequisites for pluralism. As it would be virtually impossible to convince them or to impose on them the necessary elements of pluralism, if pluralism requires voluntary participation then a universal morality is logically impossible.

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culture or beliefs – e.g. in the context of religion, that there are similar passages to the Golden Rule in many religions, but that does not mean that these religions share all of the same beliefs or that they should do so. Despite looking for commonalities, it is equally important to recognize that “it is just as important to say no as it is yes” (Berger 2011. 76-78).

## Conclusion

Relativism encompasses many theories and holds a variety of specific definitions that stem from the weak and obvious fact that all things relate to something else. Radical logical or moral relativism imply that there is no truth, no perennial questions, or anything good or evil to an individual, because everything depends on the individual's framework. This claim is vulnerable to self-refutation, but we presented here additional challenges inherent to the logic of relativism. Rather than to summarize, we would like to reiterate the questions that these challenges pose: When and why does the social construction of an individual end? And how can we understand cultures outside our framework?

However, our main goal has been to present some practical problems that arise within a multicultural society by focusing on immigration and education. Globalization has changed the reality of many places in the world today by increasing contact among different cultures. Holding on to the relativistic claim that an individual's morals and values are 'right' only within his/her own framework can make policy development and implementation impossible.

The most alarming is that unexpected consequences may follow from relativism, especially in its radical form because it can justify violence or atrocities as a moral element of a specific culture. Holding on to the relativist perspective also prevents societal improvement when cultures clash concerning irreconcilable differences, and it could possibly lead to unrest.

We have briefly presented pluralism not only as a more sound, but also as a more realistic alternative to relativism. Pluralism heeds the notion that human beings have frameworks that are sociologically developed. However, these frameworks are neither necessarily fixed nor left unchallenged as 'right' in their own context. A pluralistic view solves some paradoxes in relativism since recognizing reason promotes communication and reconciliation and grants the possibility of discovery processes. This does not always make policy-making, conflict prevention or conflict resolution easy, but it creates a platform for compromise. In other words, dialogue is a path leading away from several dangers inherent to relativism. However, pluralism does not require a universally recognized morality, in fact, as a consequence, sometimes excludes those unwilling to participate in dialogue.

The role dialogue plays is to better understand the 'Other' and the 'Other's' point of view, to better be able to co-exist with different cultures. This does often rely on finding common ground – e.g. in the context of religion, that there are similar passages to the Golden Rule in many religions – but that does not mean that these religions share all of the same beliefs or that they should (Berger 2011. 76-78).

There is no way to force individuals to engage in a dialogue about their convictions. Only people willing to do so and who accept the possibility of compromise can be brought to the table, but co-existence should not, in fact, depend on weakening people's faith or moral convictions. After a dialogue encounter, an individual is still able to use reason to decide for him/herself. Without this inclusion of reason, truth and justice become merely a matter of taste: "I like my coffee with milk and you like it without; I am in favor of kindness and you prefer concentration camps" (Berlin 1998/2013. 14).

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