A Single True Morality? The Challenge of Relativism

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Ethical objectivists[1] hold that there is one and only one correct system of moral beliefs. From such a standpoint it follows that conflicting basic moral principles cannot both be true and that the only moral principles which are binding on rational human agents are those described by the single true morality. However sincerely they may be held, all other moral principles are incorrect. Objectivism is an influential tradition, covering most of the rationalist and naturalist standpoints which have dominated nineteenth and twentieth century moral philosophy: there is widespread agreement amongst relativists themselves that objectivism is firmly rooted in common sense.[2]

Moral relativism is an important alternative to this view. Relativists challenge objectivism by drawing attention to the extent of moral diversity between different cultures; to the variation in morals within a given society at different historical epochs; and to the existence of a remarkable degree of moral disagreement within cultures at a single period of time. In the light of such diversity relativists argue that the objectivists' belief in the existence of a single true morality is a product of human ethno-centrism and, invoking Protagoras, suggest the more modest thesis that the moral opinions 'of each and every one are right' (Theaetetus 162a, Plato 1961). Traditional moral relativism therefore, normally involves the theses that different societies hold incompatible basic moral principles, that each of these incompatible principles is in some sense correct, that morality has its foundations in varying human affective dispositions and that, as a consequence, there is no single true morality. The flourishing of relativism which modern moral philosophy has witnessed (Arrington, 1983, 1989; Foot, 1982; Harman, 1975, 1977, 1978a, 1978b; Margolis, 1988; Williams, 1974–5; Wong, 1984) has been largely associated with two developments in the understanding of rela-

[1] I use the term 'objectivism' rather than 'universalism' since the existence of principles applicable to all rational human agents is consistent with these principles not being recognised by some agents.

[2] An exception is Gilbert Harman who holds that relativism is a common-sense view. See Harman, 1975, 1977, 1978a, 1978b.

tivism: a new understanding of—or perhaps a renewal of interest in—the role of truth for relativism and a redefining of the relationship between relativism and the emotions. It is around these themes that the present discussion will revolve.

Twentieth century interest in relativism can be traced to the impressive, though greatly neglected, empirical and philosophical work of the Finnish writer, Edward Westermarck (Westermarck, 1906–8, 1932). Westermarck's relativism centred around the two themes—the role of truth and of the emotions—which I have identified as being central to modern relativism and if the details of his account are unsatisfactory he nonetheless foreshadowed the direction in which successive defenders of relativism have looked and signalled the difficulties which modern relativist theories have confronted. Westermarck's significance is sometimes obscured by the tendency of some commentators to view him as a defender of that form of naive subjectivism which holds that moral terms describe the approval and disapproval of the person making the judgment or as a defender of that equally naive relativism which holds that all moral judgments are relative to the person who makes them. As recent scholarship has shown (Nielsen, 1972, 1982; Mackie, 1977; Stroup, 1981, 1982, 1985). Westermarck held neither of these theories. The central purpose of his moral theory was to undermine the various forms of objectivism, both naturalist and rationalist, which dominated late nineteenth century ethics and to put in their place a descriptive-explanatory relativism which denied the relevance of truth to morality and stressed the role of the emotions in the moral life. In attempting this ambitious project he demonstrated that the theoretical interest of relativism extends far beyond naive subjectivism and relativism and sketched contours within which much recent relativist thought has operated.

Westermarck criticised objectivist normative ethics as being 'the fruit of an illegitimate union between the theoretical search for truth and the practical need to erect norms for human conduct' ('Normative and Psychologische Ethik', Westermarck Archives, Abo Akademi, Finland, quoted in Stroup (1985)). Although it is clear that the first two chapters of *Ethical Relativity* are designed to demolish objectivism the exact position which Westermarck took with regard to the possibility of moral truth is not entirely clear: at times he seemed to argue that questions of truth and falsity simply do not arise in connection with moral issues, at other times he holds that moral judgments have truth values but that all moral judgments are false. What he does make clear, however, in a way that looks back to Smith and Hume and looks forward to

Mackie, is his belief in the centrality to morality of the retributive emotions. The sentiments of gratitude and resentment give rise to impartial and disinterested moral concepts and it is the emergence of these moral concepts which causes us to attribute to actions and characters qualities which they do not in fact possess. The objectivisation involved in this process, the persistent yet misguided human tendency to treat subjective dispositions as if they were the objective properties of actions, is responsible for the tendency which we have to attribute to objects moral properties which do not exist.

The most impressive feature of Westermarck's work is the way in which it combines philosophical, anthropological and psychological insights into a descriptive-explanatory account of morality; its least satisfactory aspect is the inconclusiveness of the arguments that Westermarck advanced for his basic philosophical positions. Difficulties of exposition and argumentation affect both his treatment of the truth of moral judgments and the role of the emotions in the moral life. Consider first the issue of whether or not truth-values apply to moral judgments.

Throughout his writings Westermarck oscillates between what are now referred to as 'error theory' and 'irrealism'; between the view that all moral judgments are false and the very different, and incompatible view that truth and falsity are not applicable to moral judgments. Neither his own work nor the work of sympathetic commentators yield a single coherent position on this fundamental point. Both views face formidable obstacles (see the discussion in Harrison, 1982). The first view is at variance with unreflective moral discourse. In non-philosophical moments a person who believes that cruelty is wrong would happily agree that the statement '"cruelty is wrong" is true' accurately describes her position on the morality of cruelty. Why, then, is falsity applicable to moral judgments but truth is not? Everyday moral discourse provides no hint as to why the one is appropriate and the other is not. Secondly, we support some moral judgments with reasons and reject other moral judgments with reasons; and these reasons, if conclusive, would naturally be construed as reasons for the truth and falsity of the moral judgments in question. However, although the reasons against a judgment can be reasons for its falsity the reasons for a moral judgment can not be construed as reasons for its truth. This also seems counter-intuitive. Thirdly, moral judgments can contradict each other. '"Cruelty is wrong" is true' would naturally be viewed as contradicting the judgment '"cruelty is wrong" is false' but this appearance of contradiction must be misleading if, *ex hypothesi*, moral judgments cannot be true. On

this construal moral judgments cannot contradict each other. It may be replied that these arguments merely reiterate common sense convictions which it is the job of philosophy to challenge. But if we are to set aside such deep-seated features of human thought at the bidding of a philosophical theory we are entitled to ask what the theory is and which arguments require us to accept it. Neither Westermarck nor contemporary defenders of 'error theory' have provided any such arguments.

It may be more charitable, therefore, to interpret Westermarck as holding the second view, namely that truth and falsity do not apply to moral judgments. This is an intelligible view, but it is at variance with the way in which we think and talk about moral issues and requires a philosophical defence which Westermarck nowhere provides. In place of arguments, what he does provide is a descriptive-explanatory account of the role of the emotions in moral life, and it is here, perhaps, that the core of his argument is to be found. Unfortunately, Westermarck's account of the emotional foundations of morality is as ambiguous as his account of moral truth. In what sense do the retributive emotions of indignation and approval cause moral judgments to be made? Is there a causal relationship between morality and the emotions? Does a stronger, necessary connection obtain? Textual evidence suggestive of each of these positions can be found.[3] Undoubtedly contingent associations exist between morality and the emotions but it is not clear that a causal link has ever been established. However, these unclarities do not go to the root of the problem. Even if a constant association or a universal causal connection were established between morality and the emotions, this in itself would not be sufficient to undermine objectivism and secure Westermarck's relativism. To take the most obvious example, the utilitarian belief that there is an intimate connection between morality and affective dispositions does not in any way undermine the possibility of moral truth. The provision of a descriptive explanatory account of morality does not refute objectivism in any obvious way.

It seems then that neither the account of moral truth nor the account of the moral emotions gives adequate reason to accept Westermarck's relativism. His claim, in the opening pages of *The Origins and Development of the Moral Ideas* (1906–8, p. 60), that 'moral concepts are ultimately based on emotions either of indignation or approval' has not been clarified sufficiently to enable it to do the work required of it. As Nielsen, a sympathetic commen-

[3] K. Nielsen, for example, lists twelve different interpretations which may be placed on Westermarck's views. See Nielsen (1982) pp. 126.

tator has argued, 'his (Westermarck's) account is just too indeterminate, too imprecise, and too subject to various readings to carry the day for ethical skepticism.' (Nielsen, 1982, p. 128)

That there are philosophical weaknesses in Westermarck's work should not, however, obscure his contribution to the modern rehabilitation of moral relativism. He restated a bold relativism at the end of a century when objectivism had been in the ascendancy and, even if it cannot be claimed that his work shaped later developments, his account certainly foreshadowed the shape that twentieth century defences of relativism would take. Whether modern developments in the field of truth and the emotions have made good the deficiencies in Westermarck's account we may now begin to assess.

Truth is a particularly difficult concept for relativists because it seems that it is, at one and the same time, both essential to their theory and fatal to it. The case for saying that it is essential to it is easily appreciated. Firstly, relativism must in at least some sense be viewed as true by its defenders: their arguments being designed to establish just that. Secondly, moral relativism differs from cultural relativism in that it goes beyond the claim that different societies hold different basic moral principles: moral relativists hold that incompatible basic moral principles are both, in some sense or other, correct. This feature of moral relativism is sometimes disguised by the terminology in which it is presented. Thus it is common to read, for example, that the moral norms of a community are the only valid basis for moral appraisal, that different societies are subject to different moral constraints, that human custom determines what is right and wrong, that a plurality of adequate moral systems apply to human conduct. Although expressed in a number of different ways, what these formulations have in common is their endorsement of the differing and incompatible moral systems. Truth, therefore is essential to relativism.

Paradoxically, as the Platonic critique of relativism makes clear, truth also threatens to generate fatal incoherencies in a relativist theory. Socrates argues that an assertion of the truth of relativism involves assenting to contradictory moral principles, involves claiming for the relativist principle a status which it claims to be impossible, involves undermining that very notion of rightness which relativism itself must use. The force of these arguments has been widely recognised throughout the history of ethics and the arguments have been given numerous contemporary restatements. They are controversial, however, because they construe relativism as being constituted by what is now commonly referred to as 'vulgar relativism', and it is to restore the integrity of relativism that

modern 'sophisticated' versions of the theory have been constructed. What is interesting about the 'sophisticated' relativist account of truth is that it recognises the importance of truth to relativism, it avoids Socratic charges of incoherence and it avoids Westermarck's view that all moral judgments are false.

A central theme in modern defences of relativism is that Protagorean relativism has never been given a fair hearing; relativism has been especially weakened, it is argued, by grafting onto it an absolutist theory of truth. According to Socrates, Protagoras held that 'my perception is true for me' (*Theaetetus* 160c, Plato, 1961) and 'what seems true to anyone is true for him to whom it seems so' (ibid. 170a). But when it comes to examining the view Socrates conveniently forgot the hyphenated conception of truth and talked of truth simpliciter, thinking of the predicate as complete, like 'round' or 'red'. A thorough-going relativist, however, takes 'true' and 'false' to be incomplete and to require reference to a person or culture. If, in this spirit, we assert that 'P' is true and false when expressed in two cultures S_i and S_{ii} our assertion is not incoherent, just as the claim that a person is big is consistent with the claim that he is small when a comparison is being made with two people of different size. 'True' and 'false' may be contradictories, but 'true-in-S_i' and 'false-in-S_{ii}' are not contradictories. Relativism, therefore, is not incoherent. Protagoras' germinal idea was that there is no such thing as truth, only truth-in-S_i; there is no such thing as rightness, only rightness-for-S; indeed, there is no such thing as reality, only reality-for-S.

Moral relativists such as Philippa Foot and Robert Arrington are attracted to this line of argument. According to Arrington, 'The whole point of the relativist position is that we cannot assert that a moral judgment is true simpliciter, we can only assert that a judgment is true for a particular person or social group' (1983, p. 228). Foot, discussing the relativity which she discerns in judgments of taste, writes,

> if we are talking of the views of another society we shall speak of what is true by their standards and by our standards, without the slightest thought that our standards are 'correct.' If the ancient Mexicans admired the looks of someone whose head had been flattened, a proposition not about this admiration may have been true as spoken by them, though it is false as spoken by us. (Foot, 1982, p. 155)

Whilst many relativists appeal to relative truth, the concept rarely receives the elucidation that it requires. What is meant by saying that a statement is true relative to some culture or belief-system?

Is it any different from saying that the belief in question is true? Does it mean no more than that the statement in question is believed?

One philosopher who views relative truth as of fundamental importance to epistemology and who has sought to provide an account of its meaning, is Jack Meiland. He develops (1977, p. 571) a distinction between 'absolute truth' which involves a two-term relation between statements and states of affairs, and relative truth which involves a three-term correspondence relation between statements, states of affairs and a third term which is either persons, world-views or cultural situations: it is correspondence-to facts from the point of view of the person or society.

The presence of the hyphens in 'true-for-W' distinguishes relative truth from absolute truth, and Meiland continues:

> Thus one can no more reasonably ask what 'true' means in the expression 'true-for-W' than one can ask what 'cat' means in the word 'cattle'. True-for-W denotes a special three-term relation which does not include the two-term relation of absolute truth as a distinct part. (Ibid. p. 574)

Critics of relativism have dismissed Meiland's analysis of relative truth. Harvey Siegel (1987), for example, points out that the analogy with 'cat' and 'cattle' does nothing to help explain the meaning of relative truth. The word 'cattle' is made up of the letters c/a/t/t/l/e; 'cat' is no more independently meaningful than are 'att' or 'ttle'. 'True-for-W' on the other hand, is made up of the hyphenisation of distinct concepts, each of which is independently meaningful. Wholly sceptical conclusions are drawn from this: relative truth is meaningless and reduces on analysis either to mere belief or to absolute truth. Siegel is right to point to the inadequacies of Meiland's attempted elucidations but his scepticism about relative truth is premature. Indeed, it is not clear that he has properly understood Meiland's intentions. What Meiland is arguing in the (admittedly strange) passage quoted above is that relative truth is a primitive term and that it is not reducible to or analysable in terms of anything else. The concept of relative truth may fail for other reasons but it does not fail because it is unanalysable in terms of other things.

An alternative, though ultimately no more successful approach to the nature of relative truth is contained in an article by F. C. White (1986). White takes 'true' and 'false' to be incomplete and argues that 'P is true' in society S_1 and 'P is false' in society S_2 involves no incoherence. The explanation is that P means quite different things in the two contexts. It is the error of thinking that

they are univocal which generates the charge of incoherence. White illustrates his account by reference to alternative geometries. How can we reconcile the fact that a statement such as 'the sum of the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles' is true in one geometry with the fact that it is false in another geometry? White argues that when stated in terms of relative truth the appearance of contradiction is removed: the presence of hyphens means that two distinct and consistent propositions are being asserted. Hence relativism, interpreted in terms of relative truth, does not involve assent to contradictory propositions. White says, 'When S_i is true and S_{ii} is false, different propositions are at stake' (ibid. p. 333). The use of a common expression serves simply to remind us that truth is always system-relative.

Admirably clear though this account may be there are two difficulties in connection with it. Firstly, why is a theory of relative truth needed at all? Relative truth was introduced in order to prevent relativism lapsing into incoherence, but on White's account incoherence is no longer a problem: all that is needed is for the distinct meanings of ambiguous expressions to be clearly delineated and this can be accomplished within the context of an absolute theory of truth. Secondly, if the propositions are indeed ambiguous how can the fact that both interpretations are true undermine objectivism? No doubt objectivism is in jeopardy if a single belief is true in one society and false in another, but objectivity is in no way threatened by the fact that we may say of two propositions, that both are true or that one is false and the other is true. White's account of truth fails, therefore, because it makes relative truth redundant and it transforms relativism in such a way that it no longer threatens objectivism.

The concept of relative truth can be given content which is intelligible, does not involve ambiguity, or collapse into absolute truth if we construct a minimalist account and build on it. Consider an account in which 'P is true for S_i' merely means that P is believed by society or belief-system S_i. This minimalist account can be enriched if we draw on ideas in epistemology. On a widely held theory of epistemological justification a belief is justified if it coheres within a comprehensive set of explanatory beliefs. However, in addition to asking if a belief is justified within a total belief-system S_i we can also ask if a belief coheres and is justified within a specified sub-system of beliefs S_{ii}. If a belief displays maximum coherence within such a sub-system then we may express this by saying that it is justified-in-S_{ii}. The purpose of the hyphens in this context is to indicate a qualified form of justification: the belief is justified, but it is justified only in relation to a

limited class of beliefs. A similar point might be made in connection with truth. Just as issues of absolute truth can be raised in connection with a total system of beliefs so issues of relative truth can be raised in relation to specified sub-systems of belief: a belief which coheres within a comprehensive, explanatory sub-system of belief might therefore be viewed as relatively true. To say that P is true-for-S_i is to say that, judged purely in the context of the sub-system of beliefs, P is true. This is, I think, the most plausible way to construe Protagoras' conception of relative truth. It allows for continuity between absolute and relative truth, it makes an intelligible distinction between relative truth and falsity and it is significantly applicable to different societies and belief-systems. If relative truth has a role in the vocabulary of rational inquiry then its most satisfactory explanation is in this form.

As was the case with White's account, the conception of relative truth which I have described, although intelligible, nevertheless fails to undermine objectivism. The fact that relative truth can be predicated of limited sub-systems of belief is wholly consistent with the absolute truth of those beliefs which display maximum explanatory coherence within a comprehensive belief-system. The history of human thought is a long story which illustrates this point: beliefs which are considered true when viewed from a limited perspective have been transcended when placed within a wider framework of beliefs. This is no less true of moral than of scientific beliefs: the goal of rational moral inquiry must be to transcend relative truth, to build upon its partial insights, and to bring about a comprehensive and rational synthesis of our moral judgments and principles.

Truth, therefore, remains a fundamental obstacle to the development of a relativist ethic, rendering relativism incoherent if construed in absolute form, and failing to undermine objectivism if construed in relative form.

A second strand of modern relativist thought places less emphasis on truth and seeks foundations for relativism in a theory of the emotions. Its advocates constitute a very heterogeneous group of philosophers embracing non-cognitivists such as C. L Stevenson (1944, 1963) and R. M. Hare (1952, 1963) and more recent writers such as G. Harman (1975, 1977, 1978a, 1978b) and B. Williams (1974–5). In a variety of different ways, however, and especially in their rejection of any strong sense of moral truth and their acceptance of some form of internalism, the relativism inherent in their position provides a coherent expression of Westermarck's claim that an adequate relativism is properly grounded in a theory of human affective dispositions.

Internalism, the view that assent to a moral principle provides an agent with a reason to act in favour of it, has a relationship with relativism which has rarely been systematically explored. The classical expression of twentieth century internalism which is developed in the work of Stevenson and Hare explicitly repudiates relativism but these writers have sustained their positions by misrepresenting relativism and by neglecting important relativist aspects of their own theories. Both Stevenson and Hare equate relativism with the naive subjectivist view that moral predicates describe subjective states and since this view forms no part of their theory they reject the charge of relativism. However, this is an inadequate conception of relativism, and central aspects of non-cognitivist views of truth and rationality justify one in viewing them as variants of relativism. Their view of truth is a convenient point of entry into their theories.

Unlike Westermarck who, as we have seen, was equivocal concerning the possibility of moral judgments having truth values, non-cognitivists view moral judgments as being analogous to commands or expressions of approval and as being true only in the sense that calling them true expresses an appropriate form of assent. According to Hare (1963, ch.11) moral judgments are 'universal prescriptions' distinguishable from straightforward commands chiefly by virtue of the fact that assent to a moral judgment implies commanding consistently in relation to everything that is similar in morally relevant respects. Several aspects of his non-cognitivism are strongly relativist in character.

Firstly, according to Hare, no necessary connection, semantic or otherwise, links moral predicates to the properties upon which they are supervenient. Ultimately, the only connection between the cruelty or the dishonesty of an action and the wrongness of an action is the fact that the person judging cruelty and dishonesty to be wrong has chosen or decided to accept a principle involving the connection; or, at most, the part that the principle plays in the way of life that they have chosen. A person making no such connection and sharing no such way of life, would be guilty of no rational error. Secondly, Hare's account of morality contains an elaborate theory of justification which allows for moral argument and rational criticism. An important part of that account is that accepting a moral principle entails acting on it in appropriate circumstances. If this is taken along with the universalisability of moral judgments we get the view that a person only assents to a moral principle if he is willing to play his part in the situation even if he were in the position of one of the other parties affected. Thus if I hold that racial discrimination is justified I must prefer that I be discrimi-

nated against if I belonged to an appropriate racial group; if I am a committed Nazi I must consent to my being exterminated if I were a Jew. Provided, however, that he is consistent in the moral principles to which he express allegiance the 'fanatic', at the deepest level, is no less rational than a person who adopts an ethic of equal respect for persons. An acceptance of internalism entails that incompatible conceptions of the nature of moral properties and incompatible ways of life are equally rational.

Gilbert Harman shares none of the non-cognitivists' reservations concerning describing himself as a relativist. In a number of articles (Harman, 1975, 1977, 1978a, 1978b) Harman defends a form of internalism whose relativism turns on the motivational attitudes of moral agents. Unlike legal requirements which are binding whether a person finds them acceptable or not, moral requirements are binding only if a person finds them acceptable. One is subject to a moral requirement only if one has a compelling reason to act in accordance with it. Thus if a person says that a second person ought to perform action A, then the first person implies that the second person has motivating attitudes towards doing A which the first person endorses. Hence it would not make sense to say 'You ought not to do that' to Hitler in connection with his treatment of the Jews or to a member of Murder Incorporated planning the execution of a rival gang leader. Morality is founded on agreement and in such cases the relevant agreement in motivational attitudes is not present. Harman's theory is relativist because he holds that, by virtue of different motivation, two agents may be subject to different moral requirements, and that this difference is not accountable for by reference to some more fundamental requirement which applies to both agents.

In spite of the great philosophical subtlety and ingenuity with which these internalist systems are constructed, it is remarkable how very small are the aspects of moral experience for which they provide explanations and how extensive are the aspects of moral experience which are at variance with them. Non-cognitivists commonly pay attention to action-guiding aspects of our use of moral language, to the fact that 'ought' statements typically answer the question 'what shall I do?', and to the oddity involved in assenting to moral judgments and not acting in accordance with them. They ignore the fact that the same considerations apply to many other types of judgments whose objectivity is not in question. They also ignore the alternative explanations which are available for the distinctive linguistic features to which they refer. For example, the inappropriateness of the judgment 'You ought not to do that' uttered to Harman's Nazi, to bloodthirsty Martians or to a

member of Murder Incorporated is easily recognised, but an explanation seems more plausible on grounds quite different to those offered by Harman. If the creatures in question are not capable of human communication, if they are corrupted by evil, or if they are indifferent to moral considerations then we have explanations for the forms of linguistic oddness which internalists highlight which are quite consistent with a thorough-going objectivism. Harman's 'inappropriate' remarks are indeed odd, but the explanation is to be found in their weakness: is it conceivable that we would challenge evil of this magnitude with a remark as mild as this!

Equally important are the large areas of moral experience which defy the type of analysis which internalists propose. Central to internalism is the desire to affirm the existence of a link between assenting to a moral principle and acting on it and the main weakness of the theory has been that the link is forged so tightly that important areas of human experience—moral cynicism, deliberate wrongdoing and intentionally immoral advice—are rendered unintelligible.

The strength of relativism has traditionally been seen to lie in its capacity to provide an explanation of moral diversity which does justice to the integrity of contrasting moral traditions. Westermarck was concerned to describe and analyse the significance of moral diversity, but his attitude to it was ambiguous and he frequently stressed that it was not the prevalence of moral diversity which convinced him of the truth of relativism. He recognised that, far from displaying chaotic diversity, moral experience is constrained by the basic regularities of human emotional experience.

Further, he recognised that diversity can be explained in ways that are consistent with objectivism; that values may manifest themselves in very different ways in different contexts. Thus moral diversity may reflect variation in derivative and not in basic principles and may establish only the existence of different institutional expressions of universal principles.

Recognising the universal elements in human experience, Westermarck justified his relativism, therefore, by an appeal to the role of the emotions in moral life; a role which, he argued, was fundamental, and undermines any belief in objective moral truth. But having detailed the ways, consistent with objectivism, in which diversity can be explained he, along with other contemporary relativists, should have realised that the intimate connections which exist between morality and the emotions can also be readily accommodated by objectivists. That this point is overlooked is due

in large part to a failure to distinguish between the thesis that morality is relational and the quite distinct thesis that morality is relative. Harman's theory provides a classic example of how this confusion can occur. As we have seen, Harman bases his relativism on the claim that morality is relative to agreement. This, however, is not sufficient to establish the truth of moral relativism, because agreements can be relativist or universal in character, depending on whether they are binding on all rational beings or apply only to a designated cultural group of humans. One can adopt a relational account of morality without embracing relativism. Westermarck, likewise, may have been correct to remind us of the importance of the relations which hold between morality and the emotions but is wrong in inferring from this the truth of moral relativism. Once again we see how a theory which purports to be relativist can fail through its central ideas reducing to ideas which are compatible with objectivism; and we see how a theory can fail to be relativist through its association with notions which cannot be reconciled with the basic facts of moral experience.