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*Relativism*. By Maria Baghramian and Annalisa Coliva. (New York: Routledge, 2020. Pp. v + 322. $39.36, paperback.)

In this outstanding book, Baghramian and Coliva take us through a variety of prominent issues about the philosophically salient notion of relativism. The book consists of ten chapters, including an introduction to, as well as an informative historical review of, relativism in Chapters 1 and 2, followed by seven chapters covering four general types of relativism: Alethic Relativism, Conceptual Relativism, Epistemic Relativism and Moral Relativism. The book ends with an excellent concluding chapter, Chapter 10, on certain metaphilosophical issues about relativism.

The most important part of Chapter 1 is dedicated to an outline of the core features which, for Baghramian and Coliva, are common to all instances of relativism: Non-absolutism (6), Dependence (6-8), Multiplicity (8-9), Incompatibility (9), Equal Validity (9-10) and Non-neutrality (10). The chapter continues with offering stimulating remarks on the motivational grounds for relativism, especially with regard to the notions of disagreement, incommensurability and faultlessness (11-20). Chapter 2, however, is more concerned with the history of the evolution of relativism, the view which can be traced back to Protagoras (27) and which reemerges in Historicism and neo-Kantianism in 19th century (27-49) as well as, in a new form, in 20th century analytic philosophy (51-57). Chapter 3 focuses on New truth-relativism and provides a detailed critical review of the views of Kölbel (69-73) and MacFarlane (73-76), two of the most influential truth-relativists, who both believe that the truth of the proposition expressed in utterances has to be relativized with respect to the *context of use* as well as a *context of assessment*, while the latter may differ from the former (73-74). The most important problem with them, however, is to deliver a satisfactory explanation of disagreement and retraction (77-86).

Chapter 4 concerns Conceptual Relativism. Baghramian and Coliva examine the sort of relativism which arises from the holism of concepts (95-110), the most important defender of which is Quine, and the later Wittgenstein’s view of language (110-114). The chapter also focuses on Davidson’s famous argument against conceptual relativism (98-110). Davidson argues that there can be found no intelligible basis on which it can be claimed that conceptual schemes can be radically different. Baghramian and Coliva criticize this argument (106-110) and claim that what we can conclude from Davidson’s argument is “either (a) that there is a substantive identity between conceptual schemes – hence, there is only one; or (b) that despite their plurality, these conceptual schemes are all equivalent and, therefore, intertranslatable. Davidson goes for option (a)” (108-109). However, it is not clear why Davidson has to choose (a), while he endorses the indeterminacy-underdetermination distinction, which, in some sense, results in accepting (b). For Davidson, if we cannot make sense of radically different conceptual schemes, it is better we stop saying that there is only one. But he concedes that there can be different *languages*, as well as underdetermined theories, sharing the same conceptual scheme. This approves neither (a) nor (b). Since the same ontology and the same concept of truth are to be inevitably shared (as the necessary condition on the emergence of language and thoughts), we can make no claim about the intelligibility of alternative conceptual *schemes* or their identity. Thus, he does not seem to aim to “undermine (b) only through the implausible assumption that we can talk about different conceptual schemes only when such schemes are not intertranslatable” (109).

Chapter 5 is devoted to Social Constructivism, which maintains that “societies with different needs, values, or interests would construct different kinds of things” (119). Three sorts of Social Constructivism are examined: Linguistic Constructivism, which is discussed with a focus on Rorty’s “anti-representationalism” (120-126), Ontological Constructivism, with an emphasis on Goodman’s version of pluralism (127-134) and Epistemic Constructivism, with a focus on Latour’s view (135-139). Baghramian and Coliva find all three versions “to be unconvincing” (139). Chapter 6, on Relativism about Science, however, is divided into two parts: The first part outlining some famous arguments in favor of scientific relativism begins by discussing Kuhn’s notion of Scientific Paradigms (142-145) and Feyerabend’s Democratic Relativism (145-146). Four important theses leading to scientific relativism are introduced: (1) Underdetermination (146-148), (2) Confirmational Holism (148-150), (3) Theory-Ladenness of Observations (150-152) and (4) Incommensurability of Scientific Theories (153-156).Although these views are well discussed, I think more could be said about the relation between underdetermination and indeterminacy, as it has considerable outcomes with regard to conceptual, alethic, ontological and scientific relativism. The second part of this chapter brings into attention two salient attempts to undermine objectivist and absolutist conceptions of science: The “Strong Programme” (156- 161) and Feminist Epistemology (161-166).

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with Epistemic Relativism. The focus of Chapter 7 is Relativizing Justification: “what counts as the justification of a belief … depends on the epistemic system adopted ... Knowledge, like the justificatory system that underpins it, is relative” (172). Baghramian and Coliva investigate different motivations for relativism about justification by employing three famous examples: Rorty’s discussion of the dispute between Galileo and Cardinal Bellarmine (173-177), Evans-Pritchard’s Azande example with regard to relativism about logic (177-178) and Evans-Pritchard’s Azande example with regard to relativism about explanatory principles (178-179). The chapter evaluates these arguments (179-190) and ends with an interesting examination of the relation between epistemic relativism and Wittgenstein’s notion of “hinges” (190-199). Offering a satisfactory formulation of Epistemic Relativism is the main concern of Chapter 8, which is pursued by examining two famous models in favor of epistemic relativism: The replacement model formulated by Boghossian (206-209) and further developed by Kusch (209-214) and truth-relativism in the epistemic domain, originally developed by MacFarlane (214-221).

Chapter 9 on Ethical Relativism begins by distinguishing between three varieties of moral relativism: (1) Descriptive Moral Relativism (225), (2) Normative Ethical Relativism (226) and (3) finally Metaethical Relativism, on which the rest of the chapter focuses. Metaethical Relativism claims that “judgments about the truth or the correctness of moral evaluations always depend on and vary with the moral frameworks that give rise to them and do not hold absolutely” (228). Baghramian and Coliva critically examine some key approaches to this topic, including Harman’s (229-238), Kölbel’s (238-243) and Rovane’s defenses (243-249), as well as the views of William’s and Berlin’s on value incommensurability (249-253).

In Chapter 10, different plausible ways of characterizing relativism are considered, those in which relativists can avoid abandoning the principle of non-contradiction by characterizing relativism as perspectivalism (257-260) or multimundialism (260-261), and those in which the logic can be revised but relativism can be preserved, such as endorsing dialetheism (261-264) or subvaluationism (264-267). Baghramian and Coliva argue that if these formulations violate the principle of non-contradiction, the relativist “either loses the disagreement …, or … has to compromise faultlessness and parity” (269) and if they adhere to dialetheism or subvaluationism, the relativist would fail to explain the notion of disagreement. Baghramian and Coliva conclude that “ultimately Relativism may well turn out to be an incoherent concept” (269). Perhaps it would not be unfair to conclude that the book is an attack on relativism.

The book goes beyond expository and introductory material. Each chapter contains a chapter summary and suggestions for further reading, together with a useful glossary of relevant philosophical jargon. The book is very useful for graduate students in philosophy and certainly a substantial addition to the existing literature on relativism.

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