

Chart summary for part I Moral skepticism:* a comparison

Questions	Moral skepticism*			Subjective relativism	Subjectivism	Emotivism
	Psychological egoism	Cultural relativism (simple)	Cultural relativism (sophisticated)			
1 What is the theory a theory of?	A theory of motivation (a psychological theory, not a moral theory)	A theory about the nature of morality	A theory about the nature of morality	A theory about the nature of morality	A meta-ethical theory: a theory of the meaning and function of moral language (and the language of value in general)	A meta-ethical theory: a theory of the meaning and function of moral language (and of the language of value in general)
2 What is the main thrust of the theory?	All human acts are self-regarding and <i>could</i> not be anything else	Morality is entirely a matter of custom, which varies from culture to culture. There are no moral truths	There are genuine moral values but they are real only from within the perspective of a culture or tradition	God is dead and convention is empty so I must create my own authentic morality for myself	Moral judgments are declarations of personal feelings or attitudes. ("Lying is bad" means "I hate lying")	Moral judgments are exclamations (non-statemental expressions) of personal feelings or attitudes. ("Lying is bad" means "lying boo!")
3 Does the theory allow for any moral reality (any moral truths?)	Universal ethical egoism is an option (otherwise there is none)	There is no moral reality or moral truth – only various customs, practices, and beliefs	Yes, there is a moral reality but it is <i>internal to</i> (true only from within) a culture or tradition	Yes. There is a private or personal moral reality (there are private or personal moral truths)	No. There is no moral reality (there are no moral truths)	No. There is no moral reality (there are no moral truths)
4 Is there an authority for moral judgments? If so, who or what?	There is no authority. (You don't need an authority to tell you to be as clever as you can at pursuing your own advantage)	One's culture or tradition is <i>seen from within</i> as authoritative, but there is no real authority	Yes. The authority is the culture, the tradition, or consensus	Each person, as the creator of his or her own private morality, is his or her own authority	No. There is no authority because there is no morality – only feelings and attitudes	No. There is no authority because there is no morality – only feelings and attitudes
5 Does this view inevitably lead to moral nihilism and anomie?	No. Not if you're happy with it	Yes. No moral beliefs are seen as valid	No. Not if you can accept it	No. Not if you can accept it	Yes	Yes
6 What is the main flaw in the theory?	It confuses "Every act is done to satisfy some desire of the agent's own", which is certain and necessary, with "Every act is done to satisfy a self-regarding desire," which is not	It makes the false assumption that morality consists in following accepted customs and practices	These theorists fail to note that we need not, and often cannot, appeal to a culture or tradition in defending our moral claims	This theory fails to note that morality has a social function which a purely private morality could not have	We neither mean nor are we understood to mean to be simply declaring our personal attitudes or feelings when we make moral judgments	We neither mean nor are we understood to mean to be merely shouting or emoting when we use moral language sincerely
7 What is the grain of truth in the theory?	There really is no such thing as altruism, if by that is meant selflessness. In acting for the sake of something other than yourself you are still doing what is most important or what matters the most to you	Moral beliefs and practices really do vary from culture to culture (but no moral conclusions can be drawn from that)	These theorists at least recognize that there is a moral reality, even if it is a different reality from within each distinct culture or tradition	Conscientiousness really is a virtue, as is being true to yourself	In making moral assertions one is also expressing the implicit attitudes that go with the moral beliefs	In making moral assertions one is also expressing the implicit attitudes that go with the moral beliefs

* These are all forms of skepticism that would cast in doubt the possibility of an objective, universal, and