

A Critical Study of Relativism: A Feature of Postmodernism

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Abstract

In the Western countries, the concept of postmodernism is not new and novel. It is an extension of human inquiry in social issues and problems, new shapes of expressions and new trends of analyses and sensibility. Relativism is a prominent feature of Postmodernism. Relativism is a doctrine and set of beliefs about absence of truth, that there is no absolute truth which is equally valid to all. Individual's version of truth differs and varies. In the present postmodern circles of philosophy and other fields of wisdom, prominent and most widely discussed verities of relativism are: Moral Relativism, Cultural Relativism, Historical Relativism, Epistemic Relativism, Conceptual Relativism, Alethic Relativism, Epistemic Relativism, Rational Relativism, Logical Relativism, Anthropological Relativism, Descriptive Relativism, Normative Relativism, and New Relativism etc. It claims that two persons bearer of opposite ideas may be right at the same time. This formula is also applicable to religion that is all religions are equally valid. In actual life and experience this is not the case. Some things are plainly right and straightforwardly wrong, not relative and regardless of tastes of people. This article presents critical analysis of Relativism and its different features. The study shows logical paradox of Relativism.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Metanarratives, Relativism, Skepticism, Paradigm shift.

Introduction:

Closing decades of twentieth century announced fading of modernism. Twenty first century is the century of postmodernism. Postmodernism by certain angles is a reaction of modernism. In the period of modernism human life was mechanical in style bound to discipline (rules and regulation). Our age is known digital age; computer technology is all around us. We use it in every field of life. It enables us to do amazing things. We are going further and beyond the imagination. Now digital world is blended with the real/material world. This is the world with simulacra, simulation and holograms. Holography has enabled us to do new ways, to visualize our work and experience. New ways to share ideas with each other. More measureable and accurate ways to plan. New ways to teach and transfer knowledge. New ways to collaborate and explore the places we never been. And new ways to create the things we imagine, because we want to change the world, rule the world and control the world. This has been keen desire of past generations too. Who is more successful to realize its dreams, history will decide in future. Present age is postmodern, not post in literal meaning, but new, powerful, diverse, relative, plural and rich by every aspect. The age of realism, unrealism and surrealism, in which reality is blended with fantasy.

In general trends of societies, especially the Western countries, the concept of postmodernism is not new and novel. It is an extension of human inquiry in social issues and problems, new shapes of expressions and new trends of analyses and sensibility.

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Scholars of present age believe that ideas of modernism were vague, confusing and misleading. Even ideas and concepts of postmodernism are vague, juxtaposing, contradictory and paradoxical. Relativism, skepticism and pluralism are examples. Lyotard called postmodernism, the age of incredulity toward Meta narratives (a big story or belief of nation or society), ours is the age of abrupt and revolutionary changes. Structures and idols of modernism, which shadowed the whole twentieth century, have been pulled down. Philosophy and social the style of our age is known as postmodernism. Postmodernism is promoter of richness of meaning instead of clarity and accuracy of meaning (which was fashion of modernism). It evokes and provokes many levels and layers of reality, instead of single and unique concept. Relativism is big example, which is discussed below. Postmodernism shows tendency towards not knowing things for sure and is against absolutism and universality. Underlying idea is that "nothing is knowable for sure, explanation helps to determine, and every *meaning* is a word of language spoken by different people. So, richness of meaning gives birth to relativism. Now we discuss in detail this feature of postmodernism.

Relativism:

Merriam -Webster online dictionary defines Relativism as:

- a "A theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and the conditions of knowing."
- b. "A view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them."¹

According to the definition quoted above, knowledge has been related to the human mind. Reason and intellect is considered standard and yardstick to measure every kind of knowledge. And we know intellect has limited faculty of knowledge. In other definition ethical rules and principles are considered dependent on human likes and dislikes, which are obviously vary from person to person and society to society. We consider another definition of Relativism, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes relativism:

"Is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning and procedures of justification are products of different conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them."²

This definition determines quality of things according to the frame of assessment that may local, global or individual. Truth of claims is dependent upon the circumstances in which the claim is being declared. Relativism has been its different forms guises is the most prominent features of postmodernism. Actually, relativism is not a single doctrine, belief or theory; rather, it means a set of views (paradoxical and juxtaposing) about ethics, morality, conventions and culture of societies. It is a belief which denies the presence of absolute, unique and single truth instead it proposes the idea of the presences of different truths at the same time. It holds up that one person's truth may different from other one, but both truths may valid equally. Therefore, two persons bearer of different doctrines and beliefs systems may be right at the same time. All that matters is scale of assessment and frame of reference. This belief also applies to religious views; i.e. all religions and their teaching are equally valid and no religion is superior to

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relativism> /15/4/2018

² <http://Plato.Stanford.edu/entries/Relativism> 30/10/18

the other. Theory of relativism is a smart effort to minimize misunderstandings found in plural and multicultural societies. Pluralism is also a social phenomenon and fact of postmodern age. Relativism is a philosophical doctrine to give a chance to come close all ethnic and religious communities to come close and resolve their differences. Relativism is culmination of tolerance at big scale as tolerance is attributed the individuals whereas relativism is paradigm and discourse of groups and communities. But in this effort it denies general and universal facts. Everything becomes relative and dependent on other. Ethics, cultures, even religious beliefs become matter of selection and circumstance. This approach has given rise to indifference, superficiality and skepticism about religious beliefs and universal truths. It has become a challenge for religious communities including Muslims. We shall discuss about it in the following pages. First we describe historical background of the term, relativism.

Historical Background:

History of the term goes back to Greek Sophists and philosophers. Some of its traces however, can be found before Greek period. Some schools of thought such as Peronism and Academic Skepticism were found in ancient Greece. Relativism as doctrine was established in 5th century BC by the sophists. Sophists are therefore, considered founders of relativism. Protagoras (490-420BC) was the first who said:

“Man is measure of all things; of things which are, that they are. And of things which are not, that they are not.”³

Although on the base of above aphorism it is not possible to establish a complete ideology of relativism. In the Middle Ages religion (Christianity) was a ruling force over other ethical systems. So, Bible was prevailing force over other human faculty and thinking. Church decided the way of thought and line of practice for public, anyone who was opposed was silenced by Inquisition Courts. Afterwards, in the renaissance period rationality defeated Bible and hence church become a weak institute. Authority of Bible was questioned and rule of Church masters was replaced with ‘public opinion’. Public understanding was given much importance. People were free to comment and explain Biblical verses. This was not Interpretation of Bible but personal explanations which were different and varying from person to person, as human knowledge and experience varies from person to person. Human observation and experience is dependent upon circumstance and circumstances differ. The term relativism came into English circles in 19th century, John Gretel, (1865) probably, used the term first time in his book, *Exploratio Philosophica*:

“The nation of the mask over the face of nature is....what I have called "Relativism.”⁴

Before English, German language was introduced with the concept of relativism by Traugott Krug who was successor of Kant, Krug defines:

“The assumption that everything which we experience and think (the self; the idea of reason, truth, morality, religion etc.) is only something relative, and therefore has no essential

³ Foch, S. The Poverty of Postmodernism, *Science Studies* vol.1, 2006, 59.

⁴ Prada, A, Postmodernism in Sociology, *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Elsevier Science Ltd. S. v. 4, 2011, 478.

endurance and no universal validity.”⁵

In the twentieth century the term was established in English political science lexicons by Bernard Crick 1962. Afterward, Paul Feyerabend promoted relativism in his writings. Main message of Paul was:

“Relativism, a solution to the problems of conflicting beliefs and different styles of life.”⁶

A major name in the field of science of twentieth century is Thomas Kahn; his philosophy of science is considered often, as relativist. Instead relativism, he chooses the concept of paradigm shift.⁷ Which he meant:

“Truth of claim or existence of a posited entity is relative to the paradigm employed.”⁸

Enlightenment figures that were instrumental in carving path of hospitality towards relativism are: Rousseau (1712-1778), Voltaire (1694-1778), Diderot (1713-1784), and Montesquieu (1689-1755). 19th century figures include Hamann J.G (1730-1788) Herder J.G (1744-1803) and Humboldt (1767-1835). Nietzsche is most important of all who put forward the view that:

“There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective knowing.”⁹

Finally in 20th century Einstein (1879-1955), proposed his world famous Theory of Relativity in 1905. Theory of Relativity, not only influenced natural sciences but also social sciences. Gilbert Herman used Einstein's Theory as model for philosophical versions of relativism his argument was:

“According to Einstein's Theory of Relativity, even an object's mass is relative to a choice of spatio-temporal framework....I am going to argue for a similar claim about moral right or wrong....are always relative to a choice of moral framework.”¹⁰

It is amazingly amusing that by proposing, Theory of Relativity Einstein never thought that his theory would be used to support relativism in ethics and epistemology. Michael Foucault, Max Stirner and Stanley Fish are also defenders of postmodern Relativism. Other critics of the age are: Christopher Norris, Alan Sokal and Jean Baudrillard etc.

Different Forms/Varieties of Relativism:

Our age is the age of knowledge explosion. Human accumulated heap of knowledge has been divided into branches and sub-branches. Different strands of intellectual schools have their peculiar trends of thought. Intellectual genealogy of relativism appeared into

⁵ Metanarratives, International journal on English language and literature, vol. I, issue 1, 2013. (<http://www.aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5019>) Retrieval date 23-3-2018

⁶ Bahamian, M. *Relativism*, London: (Routledge, 2007), 127

⁷ Grote J., *Exploration philosophic: Rough notes on Modern Intellectual Science*, (Cambridge: Dighton Bell, 1984), 291.

⁸ Krug, W.T. 2014 *Encyclopedia Lexicon in Bezug Literature and Philosophy*, (Leipzig: Nab 4 Press), 224.

⁹ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ibid, Paul Feyerabend

¹⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Relativism and the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), 432.

different guises. Every field has its exclusive relativistic doctrines, which have been discussed under different headings some are more prominent than others. Although different forms of relativism have been introduced showing different features and characteristics but there are some common traits found in them:

- i- They all deny common standards and frame of reference equally valid for all places and times.
- ii- They all claim relativity of human values, knowledge, customs etc. to other viewpoint, culture and language etc.
- iii- They all deny absolutism.
- iv- They all show leniency toward individuals instead societies or communities.

Along with these common features, thus it is not complicated to distinguish and classify different types of relativism. All types of relativism, controversial, coherent or incoherent, the degree of such level varies from one genre to other. In the present postmodern circles of philosophy and other fields of wisdom, prominent and most widely discussed verities of relativism are: Moral Relativism, Cultural Relativism, Historical Relativism, Epistemic Relativism, Conceptual Relativism, Alethic Relativism, Epistemic Relativism, Rational Relativism, Logical Relativism, Anthropological Relativism, Descriptive Relativism, Normative Relativism, and New Relativism etc. Now we discuss some of above cited types of Relativism.

i- Moral Relativism:

This kind of relativism discusses moral terms such as *right, wrong, good bad, evil, pious etc.* Personal or individual taste and liking/disliking are also discussed under this title. Gilbert Harman defines Moral Relativism in these words:

“According to moral relativism, there is not a single true morality. There are a variety of possible moralities or moral frames of reference, and whether something is morally right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust etc. is a relative matter-relative to one or another morality or moral frame of reference”.¹¹

Moral Relativism does not accept single true morality in the world. Instead, Variety of morality sets or moral systems are possible. According to moral relativists, moral frame of references vary from community to community and religion to religion. Consequently, something morally may be right for one society relative to other society may be wrong. All depends on scale of judgement. We can contextualize values according to moral relativism. Paul Boghossian, a moral relativist of our age, suggests a different way of comparison. According to him when science proved that there were no witches and hence black magic did not exist. People did not become relativist about such things as witches and witchcraft. African and Indian people still believe on Voodoo and black magic. So, it is a matter of frame of reference. Paul is of the view that:

“A morality is constituted by opinions about moral right or wrong, so moral relativism is like witchcraft.”¹²

Ultimate result of moral relativity is the conclusion that we must stop believing in moral right and wrong. The ways in which morality differ in different parts of the world may be child labor, abortion, death sentence, mercy killing, religious beliefs,

¹¹ Gardiner, P. *German Philosophy and the Rise of Relativism, The Monist*, 1981, 154.

¹² Harman, G. *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 279.

etiquettes, caste system, vegetarian or non-vegetarian food etc. Advocates of morality say that:

“The main reason to believe there is not a single true morality; is that there are major differences in the moralities that people accept.”¹³

Their claim is that there is more than one possible morality. They give example of language which is abstract assignment of meaning. Linguistic expressions which convey truthfulness in different and multi ways and styles.

Incoherence of Moral Relativism:

Moral Relativism is one of the major issues of postmodernism and Western world is seriously involved in it. Islamic world is also facing its influences. Hence, if someone believes moral relativism, practically he cannot prevent himself from immoral acts, such as bribery, adultery and pedophilia etc. Even theoretically, nobody can consider any behavior inappropriate. This is due to the doctrine of relativism, according to which right or wrong cannot be distinguished. Everyone has its own version of truth. Likewise, no attitude or viewpoint can be condemned. About any custom or tradition just an assertion is needed to declare it moral and hence it is legitimate. Due to the doctrine of relativism, most loathsome and noble works of mankind are placed just on same page, since relativism does not allow to criticize anything. Moreover, ethical and moral values become trivial and rootless because relativism does not leave room for serious attitude of humanity toward moral or ethical issues. The result of such theory may not be more than sense of absurdity, as human gentleness and nobleness can only be achieved in the conformity with the truth and virtue. Finally, due to Relativism, morality loses its existential philosophy; hence it will prove havoc to the humanity.

ii- Cultural Relatives:

Another prominent and challenging form of relativism is cultural relativism. It is a complicated concept which is rooted in the philosophy of science and languages. As we have discussed before that relativism has been discussed in contrast to Absolutism and Realism. Realism is the concept that, what is true and real exists independently of mind. The comparison between Realism and Relativism is the shadow of Immanuel Kant in his famous work *Critique of Pure Reason* (1755). Kant argued that real world which is made up of matter and moral/ social world is comprehended through the medium of our mind that:

“People’s experience of the world is mediated through the knowledge and ideas they hold about the world”.¹⁴

Consequently, this relative experience of persons and groups create the concept of relative epistemology or relative realism, which makes difficult to identify reality from superstition and convention. Cultural relativism is generally attributed with tolerance and respect for other cultures and customs. Culture is generally associated to the religious values, customs and traditions of people of specific group of territory. Franz Boes, (father of American anthropology) defines cultural relativism:

“The principle that an individual human’s beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of that individual’s on culture.”¹⁵

¹³ Andrew L.B. *On the Plurality of Actual Worlds*, (University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 94.

¹⁴ Paul Boghossian, *The Maze of Moral Relativism*, (New York: Times, July 24, 2011).

¹⁵ Harman, Gilbert, *Moral Relativism Explained*, (Princeton University, 2012), 131.

Cultural norms and values are different for different nations and people, so their meanings are different within a specific social context Geertz defines:

“The concept that the importance of a particular cultural idea varies from one society or social subgroup to another. The view that ethical and moral standards are relative to what a particular society or culture believes to be good/bad, right/wrong”.¹⁶

Cultural Relativism asserts that any standpoint is equally privileged over all others. People develop and test knowledge about social world differently; even religion is considered social phenomena. Postmodernists and poststructuralists are staunch and warm advocates of cultural relativism. Moral Conservatives strongly condemn and criticize it. They see it as demise for moral and ethical duties and obligations. Horowitz calls it:

“The transformation of scientific endeavor into a random series of quixotic, subjective decisions and choices and the end of participation in civic affairs.”¹⁷

Debates about reality, as universal truth or standard had been from time immemorial between philosophers and social scientists. The philosophers believe which is logically proved and can be judged and measured. Social scientists follow the way in which physical scientists make claim about what is exist, what is real and what can be testified as. Science produces knowledge on empirical basis. The knowledge which can be trusted repeated and tested.. Thomas Kuhn argues:

“History of science was less linear than depicted because social beliefs and personal interests shape the practice and context of science.”¹⁸

A very famous poststructuralist Micheal Foucault does not agree with scientific method. He claims:

“What counts as truth is associated with particular forms of social power.”¹⁹

He focuses on the comprehension that how things come to be known as facts. The conditions and circumstances that involve some groups to make claim of reality while others deny. Cultural relativists are confused about universal matters such as human rights, universal standards etc.

iii- Epistemic Relativism:

Epistemology is theory about knowledge and its sources. It is about the theory of how we know and what we know. Every society has its own epistemic system. Fountainhead and claims of knowledge and its reasoning have been relative for different belief systems and civilizations. Baghramian defines:

“Epistemic Relativism is the thesis that cognitive norms that determine what counts as knowledge, or whether a belief is rational, justifiable. Could vary with and are dependent on

¹⁶ Harman, Gilbert, Ibid, 134.

¹⁷ Geertz, C, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973) (New York: Maxwell Co.), 89.

¹⁸ Horowitz, L. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 9th April, 2009), 50 (31)

¹⁹ Glaze, Mark, *Cultural Relativism*, (Texas: University, 1994), 13.

local conceptual or cultural frameworks and lack the universality they aspire or pretend to.”²⁰

There are three claims about Epistemic Relativism:

- i- Epistemology is relative, so there is no sense of belief justification. And possibility of objection becomes improper.
- ii- There are different original, and even confronting systems of epistemology.
- iii- Practically, there is no easy way to prove one epistemic system superior to other.²¹

A famous epistemic relativist, Paul Boghossian, developed his “doctrine of equal validity” the view that:

“There are many radically different, incompatible, yet, ‘equally valid’ ways of knowing the world, with science being just one of them.”²²

The relativists claim that, either absolutely and dictatorially to enforce one epistemic system is superior to all other systems or gives others equal chance of legitimacy of different epistemic system is superior to all other systems. Here an example may be quoted to explain the situation which is contrast and difference between scientific and religious belief system. Here a sharp and pungent question arises; how to distinguish and identify alternative epistemic system from numerous systems. Here it would be suitable to mention famous American critic Richard Rorty:

“That there is no fact of the matter about whether the Copernican theory or the geocentric view is justified by the evidence, for there are no absolute facts about what justifies what?”²³

Rationality, logic, philosophy, science and religious beliefs are some examples of epistemology.

iv- Descriptive and Normative Relativism:

Normative Relativism is concerned with moral code; therefore, first of all we explain what moral code is? Moral code is set of beliefs (true/false may be) which are followed by majority of public in a society. Different people, nations, communities and societies have different moral codes e.g. moral code of Eastern countries is different from Western countries. Moral code must not be confused with universally acknowledged and accepted moral laws (or morality.) Keeping in view this aspect of moral code we can distinguish Descriptive Relativism from Normative Relativism.

(a) Descriptive Relativism:

This form of relativism is the field of anthropologists. It is anthropologist’s task to describe and find out different modes of thoughts, belief systems and styles of reasoning etc. of different cultural groups and communities. But it is beyond the limits of anthropology to evaluate and criticize principles and customs of societies. Now we look Maria Baghramian’s definition of Descriptive Relativism:

“This is the view that different cultures have different moral codes. This is the theory of anthropology not of ethics.”²⁴

²⁰ Dictionary. Reference.com/ cultural-relativism 24/11/2015

²¹ Baghramian, M., *Relativism*, Ibid, 139.

²² Oakley A. *Sex, Gender and Society*, 2nd edition (London Gower, 1999), 187.

²³ Baghramian M. *relativism*, rout ledge (London, New York: 2009), 154.

²⁴ Boghossian, P. *Epistemic Models*, (Blackwell Morris, 2013), 358.

Moral codes of different groups differ each other. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Eskimos, Europeans of present age and people of ancient Greece, they all differ widely. Ancient Greeks allowed incest; Hindus practiced *Settee* and human sacrifice, African tribes practiced cannibalism etc. Descriptive Relativism only studies and point out different codes and practices of people, not condemn or justify it.

(b) Normative Relativism:

Philosophers engage in this form of relativism. It is notable that both forms i.e. Descriptive and Normative are distinguishably different but there is some overlap e.g. concepts and truths are fields of interest for both philosophers and anthropologists. Normative Relativism has been defined in this way:

“Normative relativism is a theory, which claims that there are no universally valid moral principles.”²⁵

It says that actions right or wrong from moral point of view differ from people to people and there are no absolute or universal standards of morality, abode by all men of all time. Normative Relativism is about ethics of society and deals with “ought to” not “is” like Descriptive Relativism. Ought, mean Normative Relativism discussed about how and what standards of ethics should be adopted. This is the field of philosophers whereas, Descriptive Relativism is limited to describing the moral codes of any society and description of a situation is called “is”. Circumference of Normative or Ethical Relativism is limited up to three angles:

i- Everyone “ought to” practice his/her own cultural norms and practices and should not violate moral code of his society.

ii- The moral code of any society is superior/inferior to other one. There is no universally accepted remaking system for moral codes and norms.

iii. Each and every one is bound morally to tolerate moral codes of other societies. No one is allowed to enforce his moral beliefs on others. So, moral rules of right or wrong are relative to customs and norms of one’s own not to be judged others with others’ frame of reference.

A Critical Study and Objections on Relativism as a whole:

Relativism is discourse of postmodernism and it is discussed under different headings because it is found in different forms. It may differ in forms and divided into branches and verities but has common features and doctrines. Therefore, objections on its paradigms are same; here we discuss some general objections rationally, morally epistemologically and logically. These objections are general and against all forms of relativism:

i- It is true that different people have different experiences and knowledge about things. So, they have different points of view. This is the assertion of relativism that human knowledge, experience, taste, viewpoint etc. is relative. Here we consider an example, suppose there is an apple, after eating some part of it, someone says; the apple is tasty. Then another person takes a bite and proclaims the result. It a third person who do not likes apples after eating it, claims that apple is bitter, how can this result be accepted? This is matter of liking and disliking. It is not wise to say that all persons with contradictory claims are true. And their claims are matter of relativism. A person may be right on the ground of facts and other may be wrong not relative. Likewise, a ball lying on the ground is surely round not square or triangular. Shape of ball is not matter of relativism.

²⁵ Egan A & B Weather son (eds.) , *Concise Encyclopedia of Ethics and Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, 2011), 94.

ii- Relativists strengthen their claim from the idea of disagreement. They say that different nations have different beliefs about morality so; there are no objective facts of morality. We accept that there are lots of debates and heated arguments about morality for different people. But morality is not the matter of taste. Rather there are some facts which are just plainly right or wrong regardless of what any one believes. For example coffee is good, is a subjective truth, since its taste and liking varies from person to person. The Earth is round, is an objective truth because this is true regardless of beliefs of people that earth is flat. There, relativists' claim that when, people disagree about something there is not objective facts about the matter is not supported, because from time immemorial differ about shape and origin of Earth, point is how can be agreed on that there is no shape and origin of Earth as there is no agreement over certain moral issues is not enough argument to prove that there is no morality or moral codes or that everyone is right and morality laws are matter of relativism.

iii- We have already proved that basic arguments and claims of relativism are defective. Relativists' claim of no condemning of other cultures is not practically possible. For Example, Eskimo infanticide (killing of child in infancy), human sacrifice, animal worship *Sattee* (widow burning with dead body of husband in Hindus) etc. cannot be tolerated on the base of relativism. If morality and cultural customs were relative to one's culture, there would be no ground to condemn customs and traditions of other cultures no matter how atrocious and cruel they may be.

iv- According to principles of relativism, no one is allowed to criticize any culture even his own. Under relativism, decisions are made by democratic rules (majority vote), whatever majority says is permissible, is allowed and lawful. That is why Western countries are forced to legalize Lesbian, Gay marriages, abortion etc. Therefore, if relativism is true then there is no justification for disagreement.

v- Relativism also gives rise to absurd scenarios, consider ethical relativism, according to which, if people of some culture perform a wrong action enough times or for a period of long times it becomes right action. For this relativists give example of cannibalism, which was practiced in African tribes in the past but now they do not act upon it. So, it is not right we refute relativism by perverting the example as. Consider some remote Indian tribes who due to famine and hunger start eating their dead, slowly under hard conditions cannibalism starts. In the beginning opposition arises, and then majority agrees upon the practice (cannibalism). So, is it right for them to revive centuries ancient custom of cannibalism? How can they be stopped from such inhuman practice as relativism does not allow us to criticize and condemn majority culture of any society?

vi - Relativism confirms that customs, norms and codes of societies are relative and ought not to be condemned, there is no question of right or wrong, no matter, how much absurd they are. It implies that if a person revolts and rebels against immoral and inhuman customs of his society e.g. *Sattee* (widow burning in Hindus), slavery, genocide etc. The rebel, who wants to bring reforms, will be considered immoral according to relativism. There is no chance of change and revolution.

vii- Relativism is incoherent and inconsistent too, as it denies objective universally binding moral laws. Therefore its claim of tolerance to be observed for all cultures is inappropriate. It is due to misunderstanding the duty of tolerance where to show and where not to observe. There are limits of tolerance, which every nation agrees upon.

viii- The strong objection against relativism, is the argument that it inherently contradicts and stultifies itself as it states: all is relative. If all is relative, then relativism why shows attitude of absolutism.

ix- In this material world, natural laws are same everywhere. So, why not moral/ethical/epistemological laws ought to be same. And actually moral laws are same and agreed upon e.g. slavery, women emancipation, freedom of thought, tolerance etc. (Exceptions are always there).

x- Relativism undermines morality, consequently giving rise to anarchy and social Darwinism, as it denies harming others is wrong, absolutely. But it is the good aspect of relativism that it allows for the opposite belief is right, than what is the right belief. That is, if all beliefs are equally valid, then it must be true to say that all beliefs are worthless.

xi- Most strong argument against relativism is of Hilary Putnam, who proposes that relativism makes it impossible to persuade and believe one/individual on error. His words are:

“If there is no truth beyond an individual’s belief that something is true, then an individual cannot hold their own beliefs to be false or mistaken.”²⁶

Putnam wants to say that Relativism destroys the distinction between reality/truth and belief.

xii- Relativism has become a challenge for some groups in Islamic countries too. As relativism provides equal opportunity for immoral acts, based on its idea, no act can be condemned and criticized; youth of Muslim societies find refuge under the umbrella of relativism. So called (secular and liberal) scholars also argue for relativism, as right and wrong cannot be distinguished; it is matter of viewpoint. Most noble and dirty works are placed on equal position due to relativism, as there is no criterion to distinguish between them. Ethical and moral values are being considered rootless because practically no base remains for ethics.

xiii- Human nobleness only can be achieved in the light of alignment with moral and divine laws provided to humanity by the most noble chain of prophets and messengers of Allah. Relativism creates chaos in society, as people respect and feel safe in the presence of law and order, which is binding and absolute, not relative. If law is relative, then there is no peace and calm in society.

xiv- Kashefi rightly argues:

“Relativists are unaware of the fact that there is a fundamental and basic agreement on good and bad issues among all humans.”²⁷

xv- Relativism denies that any religion or philosophy can make true insertions and that they are absolute and universal. Relativism is against absolutism. They say, there is no way of knowing about God, we can only speak about it. The idea about ultimate truth is naïve and ethnocentric relativists say this about each religion and group; relativism just discourages serious attention toward most important issues of life and hereafter.

xvi- Some theorists have doubts that relativism is the struggle to prevail Eurocentrism, a term coined by Western intellectuals. They call it *a new Western*

²⁶ Kashefi, M, *Cultural Relativism*, (Journal Qabasat, 1999), No.14, P. 11.

²⁷ Hollis, Martin, *Rationality and Relativism*, (Cambridge: 1998), 84.

colonialism of values."²⁸ (28) All these efforts are being done to capture and control capital and market of the world. All this is possible to preach new kind of doctrine which is acceptable to all, so relativism is the best concept and idea for this purpose.

xvii- Thinking about relativism in a different way, we come to know that it is human nature and compulsion to live together and develop culture and civilization. According to seasonal conditions and living needs cultures vary. But human nature and basic needs are common so, some traits and characteristics will remain same. For example truth, loyalty, friendship self-control, worship to some super natural power or concept likewise all humans dislike some things e.g. theft, murder, rape, selfishness and so on.

Conclusion:

Relativism is a doctrine and set of beliefs about absence of truth, that there is no absolute truth which is equally valid to all. Individual's version of truth differs and varies. Therefore, two persons bearer of opposite ideas may be right at the same time. This formula is also applicable to religion that is all religions are equally valid. In the above pages we have tried to prove that the doctrine of relativism is illogical and impossible. The idea of relativism is self-refuting as, there is no absolute truth means there is nothing absolutely true, hence relativism too is not absolutely true. It is undeniable fact that different nations have different cultures and traits. But that does not mean that there are no universal values or truths that are equally applicable everywhere. Economic system, political system and so on are equally applicable everywhere. Every one respects democracy, banking and traffic rules. Sometimes relativists find their way into difference among religious beliefs. They say one religion or belief system is as valid and true as other one. We have discussed and proved incoherence of this idea, as differing beliefs cannot all be right. Either one has all qualities and traits of true path. It is also possible that all religions have different bits of truth.

Objections against relativism are strong and undefeatable. We can conclude from the arguments quoted above that it is a theory which is not supported by evidence gathered by anthropologists, scientists and philosophers. Logically it is incoherent and inconsistent. Postmodernism and its characteristics, traits and features are the fruit and consequence of decline of religion in the West and technologically advanced societies. As Nietzsche declared, the death of God, if God is dead then everything is permitted. Relativism is the failure to bring out third alternative of scientist (modern) and religious set of beliefs. It is also undeniable fact that this doctrine (relativism) has become very popular in the postmodern times. It is manifested in almost every part of culture and civilization of Western society. Concept of Tolerance is attractive and binding force behind this theory. Morally and religiously the West is bankrupt and devoid of divine guidance, therefore, inappropriateness to apply one moral code or standard to others is the reason and driving force behind promotion and propagation of relativism. In short, it appears that relativism must be false and inconsistent. It means that morality is not relative, rape, terrorism; killing of infants in Eskimos is not just a matter of culture and taste issues because these are concern for humanity. Some things are plainly right and straightforwardly wrong, not relative and regardless of tastes of people.

²⁸ Bahamian, M. *Relativism*, London :(Routledge, 2007),154.