Baghramian

Relativism

'It's all relative'. In a world of increasing cultural diversity, it can seem that everything is indeed relative. But should we concede that there is no such thing as right and wrong, and no objective truth? Can we reconcile relativism and pluralism?Relativism surveys the different varieties of relativism and the arguments for and against them, and examines why relativism has survived for two thousand years despite all the criticisms levelled against it.Beginning with a historical overview of relativism, from Pythagoras in ancient Greece to Derrida and postmodernism, Maria Baghramian explores the resurgence of relativism throughout the history of philosophy. She then turns to the arguments for and against the many subdivisions of relativism, including Kuhn and Feyerabend's ideas of relativism in science, Rorty's relativism about truth, and the conceptual relativism of Quine and Putnam. Baghramian questions whether moral relativism leads to moral indifference or even nihilism, and whether feminist epistemology's concerns about the very notion of objectivity can be considered a form of relativism. She concludes the relativism debate by assessing the recent criticisms such as Quine's argument from translation and Davidson's claim that even the motivations behind relativism are unintelligible. Finding these criticisms lacking, Baghramian proposes a moderate form of pluralism which addresses the legitimate worries that give rise to relativism without incurring charges of nihilism or anarchy.Relativism is essential reading for anyone interested in contemporary philosophy, sociology and politics.

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