

The ancient Greek philosophers argued over many issues, many of which are still disputed over today by modern philosophers. One of these ancient Greek philosophers, Socrates, spent most of his time ~~on~~ thinking and discussing what virtue was and what was (and how to live) a happy life. He argued that virtue is knowledge and that to do injustice never truly benefits the ~~man~~ who does it.

Socrates attempted to prove ~~one~~ of his main theses. (that evil never truly helps the evil doer) with this argument:

not needed
P35 a p
P1 Excellence is that quality which enables someone or something to function well.

P2 Vice is that quality which causes someone or something to function badly.

P3 The soul has excellence if it functions well and has vice if it functions badly.

P4 Justice is excellence of the soul and injustice is the vice of the soul.

P5 Living is a function of the soul.

C1 P5 The man of justice lives well and the man of injustice lives badly.

P6 The man who lives well is happy, while the man who lives badly is unhappy.

C1 The man of justice is happy, while the man of injustice is unhappy.

C2 Injustice, since it is a vice of the soul which causes it to live badly and thus unhappily, never truly pays the man who does injustice.

A problem here may concern premise two since it may be hard to determine just what a vice of the soul is. In different circumstances (whether within one society or between societies) an act that might be a "vice" in one circumstance might be a "virtue" in another. For instance, if one was a member of the Mafia, killing and extorting might be seen as a virtue, while not wanting to kill or extort might be seen as the "vice" of being "weak." Or, occasionally in Mainland China, the parents will kill their firstborn child if it is a girl since it is looked upon as dishonorable to have a girl as your eldest child. Therefore, since what is "vice" varies from society to society, group to group, and person to person, what may "function badly" in one place won't necessarily function so badly in another due to changed circumstances.

seems irrelevant + also not what you say later.

How exactly, is this an objection to the argument? To what in it - validity, truth of premises?

The problem with this objection in turn is that there could be a standard of absolute morality that is true and should be obeyed, even if some people refuse

to obey it while others do. Just because there are disputes on an issue doesn't prove there is no objective truth on this issue i.e. that one side isn't right (or ^{more} right) than the other. For instance, no one would claim in a dispute between those who believe those who believe the sun orbits the earth and those who say the earth orbits the sun that this dispute proves there isn't objective truth in astronomy. *Spatiotemporal Reference frames are relative, even if ethics isn't.* The same goes for ethics.

Further, to say we can't determine what vice is because of people's different opinions on ethics means we could never condemn moral action(s) under any circumstances as worse than ours. For instance, we couldn't condemn Nazi Germany's concentration camps, Soviet Russia's Gulags, nor Vietnam's "re-education" camps if we believe ethical truth varies from person to person and society to society. If we condemned Hitler or Stalin, he could just reply: "My so-called "atrocities" may seem to be a vice to you, but they are a virtue to me." This consequence of ethical relativism and subjectivism is so absurd no one can accept it seriously.

Additionally, if one's own group or society, say, discriminates against Jews, one could determine what is right or wrong just by adopting the ethics of your own group. If "whatever is, is right" be true, one need never worry about whether your own group is doing wrong or not. Your group is by definition right morally--since nobody can be wrong morally since all ethics are relative and subjective. The result of this ethical subjectivism and relativism is a KKK member or a KGB agent need never consider if his group ever acts wrongly and that he should quit or try to change it. Again, nobody seriously believes KKK members and KGB agents shouldn't ever have to consider if their group is wrong or not.

Finally, to say "all is relative," a statement which frequently appears in serious discussions on ethics, is to make a self-refuting statement. If it is true that "all is relative," then everything, including this statement, is relative. But then this statement is said to be true in all cases and under all conditions--that is, it is an absolute since it applies to everything, which

logically includes itself. Thus, "all is relative" is an absolute itself, and thus it is self-refuting, since it says all things are relative. The practical force of the self-refuting nature of this expression was driven home once when a professor said "all is relative" during one of his lectures and one of his students asked this professor something like "Are you absolutely sure of that?" In the light of these problems, the objection that "vice" is subjective and relative seems to be false, which means Socrates' argument can surmount this challenge to it, since vice is something that can be identified (and avoided).

Socrates and the ancient Greek philosophers discussed issues that still concern us today. In particular, ethics is a contentious issue (not to say the other areas of philosophy lack contentiousness also) since it has a direct application to an individual's actions. The problems of moral relativism in ethics is just as much an issue today as it was in Socrates' time. These problems with moral relativism (and the existence of this idea of ethics) are just as present today as they were in ancient Greece. On the problems of moral relativism even an ~~atheistical~~-philosopher like Ayn Rand had to comment: What subjectivism is in the realm of politics, collectivism is in the realm of politics. Just as the notion that "Anything I do is right because I chose to do it," is not a moral principle, but a negation of morality--so the notion that "Anything society does is right because society chose to do it," is not a moral principle, but a negation of moral principles and the banishment of morality from social issues." This goes far afield from the assigned topic. You go on about relativism without making clear just how this connects with the argument or getting back to the question of the argument's validity and soundness. Do you think that ~~the~~ argument is obviously sound unless one is this kind of relativist? You must acquire the discipline to stay on the topic, and to make completely ~~clear~~ clear how anything that you say connects with it. It is also your responsibility to consider the best reasons on both sides of any question that you are writing on.