Insiders, Outsiders

Reason, Relativism, and Reality

Spring 2005
Insiders

• People we must make joint decisions with, so…
• People we've been bargaining with, so…
• People party to the same moral conventions

Outsiders

• People we don't make joint decisions with, so…
• People we haven't been bargaining with, so…
• People not party to our moral conventions
Critical Engagement

• This is an umbrella term covering things like disputation, condemnation, bargaining, intervention

• A main challenge for relativists is to explain how critical engagement is possible

• This breaks into two challenges, depending whether the engagement is with insiders or outsiders
Insider challenge

Critical engagement with "insiders" -- those presumed to be working in the same framework -- is easier to understand

• **Disagree** about what the framework permits
• **Condemn** the behavior it forbids
• **Bargain** about how the framework should evolve
• **Intervene** if they don't keep up their end of the bargain
Outsider challenge

- *Disagree* about what the framework permits -- which framework?
- *Condemn* the behavior it forbids -- how can they be blamed for breaking our rules?
- *Bargain* about how the framework should evolve -- why, when they evolve separately?
- *Intervene* if they don't keep up their end of the bargain -- why, when they aren't party to our bargain?
Disengage and Tolerate

- **Justification Principle (JP):** Don't interfere with the ends of others unless one can *justify* the interference as acceptable to them were they fully rational and informed.

- Vegetarians have to tolerate meat-eaters unless they can find a "mistake;" pro-choicers expect to be tolerated by pro-lifers.

- Outsiders are not guilty of any objective mistake

- So it seems we have to tolerate their behavior however repugnant
Limits to Toleration

• Interference is avoided *other things equal*; but other things might not be equal

• There might be self-interested *reasons* to interfere which override the JP
  • It's OK to use force on law-breakers but not on meat-eaters, since they're not "hurting anyone"

• The majority might be able to *get away with* interfering
  • The majority enforces its will on bigamists etc. but not (any longer) on mixed-race couples
  • This is reconciled with the JP by treating (e.g.) single-sex couples as *mistaken (?)* about what marriage *is*
Two Kinds of Relativity

• Joylene says, "Raylene shouldn't eat meat."
• This could be relativized to Joylene's framework; that's critic relativism
• It could also be relativized to Raylene's framework; that's agent relativism
• Agent relativism provides for a limited sort of critical engagement with outsiders
• One can say their own framework provides them with reasons not to behave that way
Is that enough?

• Seems like we want to come down harder on Hitler than agent relativity allows
• He was doing the right thing for a Nazi! (?)
• Only two options open to us

Agent-relative option Suppose or pretend that even his framework condemns his behavior; he's misapplying his own rules, maybe because under a factual misapprehension about Jews

Critic-relative option Condemn him using our values while conceding this gives him no reason to change; we have self-interested reasons to stop him nevertheless, just as with a marauding tiger
Coming up

• Debate Wednesday
• Next week begin relativism about "the world"
• Read "The World" (!), chapter 7 of Simon Blackburn's excellent intro text, *Think*
• That's for Monday; further pre-Kuhnian readings will be distributed then
• Monday after that start Kuhn's masterpiece, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*