# Cultural Relativism

"The notion of truth lies in the folkways"

There are no universal truths in ethics, only various cultural codes
Our own code has no special status

## One argument used by cultural relativists

**Premise 1:** Different cultures have different moral codes
**Premise 2:** It is impossible to say if one of these codes is better than another

**Conclusion:** Therefore, there is no objective "truth" in morality. Right and wrong are only matters of opinion, and opinions vary from culture to culture.

*Is this argument sound? Does disagreement mean that there is no "right" answer?*

Cultural relativists may also point out that the belief that one from of morality is superior to another has encouraged many forms of abuse and colonialism. (Think of the "white man's burden" to civilise "savage" Africa)

## The consequences of cultural relativism

1. W could no longer say that the customs of other societies are morally worse (or better) than our own.

2. We could decide whether actions are right or wrong just by consulting the standards of our society

## Problems

1. We could not criticise our own culture's view of what's right or wrong. Every value that our culture holds must, by definition, be correct.

2. Because of 1. moral progress would be impossible.

3. Perhaps there is less disagreement than it seems?