

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Department of History
澳門大學社會科學及人文學院歷史系
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Philosophy lecture
哲學講座

**Toward a Benign Moral Relativism:
From the Agent/Appraiser-Centered to the Patient-Centered**

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10:00-11:30

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English

Abstract :

At the beginning of *Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism*, David Wong states that “‘moral relativism’ is overwhelmingly a term of condemnation, frequently of scorn or derision, a term for putting one’s opponent immediately on the defensive” (Wong 2006, x1). For this reason, “moral relativism,” in most cases, is not used to characterize one’s own view but to criticize the views of others. For the same reason, most of those characterized as relativists by others are unwilling to accept such characterization. For example, Richard Rorty is perhaps the first person to come to one’s mind when one thinks of relativists in contemporary philosophy, but Rorty never considered himself a relativist. Wong acknowledges that he is one of the “very few people willing to” “accept the label of moral relativism.” It is thus clear that Wong is not only aware of the condemnation, scorn, and derision of relativism but must also have found a way to evade it. In this chapter, therefore, after a brief analysis of problems with common versions of relativism, I shall examine Wong’s alternative version of relativism, pluralist relativism or relativism with constraints, and how it succeeds in avoiding such problems. I shall conclude with a diagnosis of a potential problem in Wong’s own relativism and explore a tentative way to avoid it.

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