Different societies have different moral codes.
There is no objective standard that can judge one societal code better than another.
The moral code of our society has no special status.
There is no universal truth in ethics.
A society's moral code is determined by that society.
We are arrogant if we try to judge the conduct of other people.
Cultures are more than a society

Cultural identifications in all kind of cultures, and on all cultural levels - define common moral circles

(see Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010)
Cultural relativity is an undeniable fact; moral rules and social institutions evidence an astonishing cultural and historical variability. Cultural relativism is a doctrine that holds that (at least some) such variations are exempt from legitimate criticism by outsiders (---). Moral judgements, however, would seem to be essential universal (Donnelly, 1984).

1. Is there such a thing like a universal moral or is it not?

2. What is “good” and “bad” with cultural relativism?
A phenomenological point of view

- Phenomenological thinkers contributed to the dominance of relativistic thinking in the 20th century.
- Husserl’s concept of “transcendental subjectivism”: He understood worldviews as cultural formations that come and go
  - “To the one human civilization there corresponds essentially the one cultural world as the surrounding life-world with its manner of being”
Ethical challenges of phenomenological approaches

• In 1961 phenomenologist Hannah Arendt followed the trial of A. Eichmann, one of the key figures of the Holocaust.

• Instead of confirming the evil-ness of Eichmann, she was questioning his motivations and blamed him for “thoughtlessness” – talking about the “banality of the evil”. She got heavily criticized for belittlement of the Holocaust.
Phenomenology’s influence on research methodology

- The subjectivist approach of phenomenology has been taken over by ethnologists/anthropologists.
- Ethnographers are more and more dealing with the life world of an individual or a group instead of focusing on an over-arching idea. This approach has been also coined as “Ethnomethodology” (Garfinkel)
- HCI has taken over this ethnomethodologist approach (cf. i.e. Crabtree)
### Differing Cultural Codes:
Due to Facts or to Values?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When is there a child? (Ontology)</th>
<th>What can be done? (Morality)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The moment of conception</td>
<td>Abortion and infanticide rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At birth</td>
<td>Abortion accepted, infanticide rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When awareness of ”I”</td>
<td>Infanticide accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ontology** refers to the definition of what constitutes a child, while **Morality** refers to the ethical considerations of what actions can or should be taken.