Gesler, ‘Cultural Relativism’

Questions about the reading:

1. What is the core claim of cultural relativism, as described by Gesler’s character Ima Relativist?
2. Why does Gesler suppose there is a problem with being able to infer “such and such is good” from “such and such is socially approved”?
3. Ima Relativist suggests that relativists are more tolerant. Why is Gesler sceptical of the view that relativism leads us to tolerant attitudes?
4. What does Gesler suppose would be taught as good moral education if we accepted cultural relativism? And why does he suppose this is problematic?
5. What is the subgroup problem?
6. Why might cultural relativism prohibit us from subjecting our values to scrutiny and learning from other cultures what we might have gotten wrong?
7. In contrast to the cultural relativist’s view, what does the objectivist view (exemplified in Gesler’s example of Martin Luther King) say?
8. Why does Gesler suppose that we cannot support relativism by appeal to the fact that morality is a product of culture. Do you think he’s right?
9. Why does Gesler suppose that we cannot support relativism by appeal to the fact that there is disagreement across cultures? Do you think he’s right?
10. Recall Mackie also reflected on moral differences across cultures. Do you recall what he concluded from this? How does it differ from the relativist’s conclusion?
11. Why does Gesler suppose that we cannot support relativism by appeal to the claim that there no clear way to resolve moral differences between cultures? Do you agree with him?
12. Gesler supposes a moral objectivist can still accept some variation between cultures. What is the difference between these variations and moral rules?