

Comparing and contrasting principles of ethical relativism



Ethical relativism has different definitions. Some quarters consider ethical relativism as a doctrine that abounds in the lack of absolute truth regarding ethics. This definition derives its basis from the notion that what can be deemed as morally wrong or right varies from one society to another or from one person to another. On the other hand, some quarters consider ethical relativism in terms of person's belief and value system. Thus, a person will tend to make choices depending on what seems to be right or wrong to himself. The basic principles of ethical relativism include subjective ethical relativism and conventional ethical relativism. These have various merits and weaknesses. It should be noted that every person subscribes to one of the two ethical relativism principles. Personally, I subscribe to ethical subjectivism.

This paper explores the principles of ethical relativism, and their strengths and weaknesses.

Subjective ethical relativism principle propagates the ideal that moral principles have never been absolute or universal. Additionally, this principle subscribes to the fact that moral principles depend more on an individual's judgment. An example of subjective ethical principle is the assertion regarding a given color. For instance, when a person says that "the color green is beautiful", this is a subjective claim and belief, which one is entitled to depending on his like for the color (Ladd 64). Notably, one person can consider a certain color to be beautiful while another person does not. One of the strengths of this principle is the fact that every person has his/ her own individual judgment regarding a certain matter. Thus, it can be considered as strength because what is morally right varies from one person to the next or

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from one society to another. A major weakness of this principle abounds from the fact that “ ethical relativism considers one thing to be right in one society while it considered wrong in another society” (Jhingran 41). This makes one imagine that they are trying to give “ right” and “ wrong” the same meaning, which is impossible.

The second principle of ethical relativism is “ conventional ethical relativism” which also denies the existence of absolute and universally principles. However, this principle differs from ethical subjectivism from the fact that it considers cultures playing a significant role in determining the reality behind moral principles. For instance, a person’s perception of right and wrong depends on his her culture. Consequently, people tend to regards something as right if it is acceptable in their society. This principle shares the same strength as that of ethical subjectivity because it also subscribes on the fact that there are no universal moral principles (Ladd 124). Another merit of this principle is that it embraces the cultural diversity around the globe. The first weakness of this principle is that it advocates for a universal conscience. According to Absolutists, this is wrong since “ every person has his/ her own conscience and can rise above the culturally set standards” (Jhingran 114). Another demerit of this principle is that it fails to consider that a person might belong to more than one culture.

In conclusion, personally, I subscribe to ethical relativism because of the ideals it upholds. The central argument is that everyone is entitled to their own judgment or opinion. This means that what one person considers as right might be, at the same time, be considered as wrong by another party.

Thus, the main reason for subscribing to ethical subjectivism is that it allows individuals to determine is wrong or right for them.