

Good example of ethical theories essay

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



1. Critically examine cultural relativism as an ethical theory.

Every individual belongs or associates oneself with a certain culture. There are many different cultures in the world with each having different ethical rules. Cultural relativism in philosophy is the view that morals are culturally determined and there is no better ethical system than the others (Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, S. J., and Michael J. Meyer, n. d). The question that arises here is whether those cultures have a definite system of morals or not. It is evidently clear that any society has a specified rules and guidelines that determine what is good or evil. For example, in some parts of Africa, women are not allowed to do certain things, such as leading men. In other societies, mainly in the western countries, such a view is held with a lot of contempt and as such, women are free to hold a leadership position.

What is the main reason why superiority of cultures is almost impossible? The moral codes depend to some extent to the social-economic status within the regions. For example, in a society where mostly men are the working groups shall have an ethical code that reflects such truth. In addition, the historical aspect of societal evolution that forms what is found in the cultures per se, play a key role in the development of an ethical system. Therefore, if any other culture is implanted in the regions and social-economic status, it cannot work. Therefore, the cultures are all equal in so far as ethical systems is concerned.

However, one wonders whether there are similarities in the ethical systems in all cultures. Yes, there are many similarities as there are differences. For example, in most cultures in the world, unnecessary killing is evil. It means

that there is no culture that allows people to kill one another for no apparent reason. The same case applies in protection of children. Children should be protected as they form the future members of the society. Does this then mean there is a universal code of ethics? Cultural relativism disagrees with this position. While this position is true, on the other hand, there is a possibility there is to some extent a universal code of ethics that is inherent in all cultures. As stated earlier, most cultures do not agree to kill without any agreeable reason. But, the presence of such similarities does not mean that all the issues are applied in a similar manner and this why cultural relativism vehemently argues that such universality in code of ethics is impossible.

If one argues that all ethics are culturally determined, one would wish to know how then do humans survive with the increasing merging of cultures and globalization? It is evidently clear that the world has since become a global village. Such does not remove the specific cultures that everyone belongs to. It is from these facts that in the current world the terms “tolerance” and “acceptance” have emerged. Culture tolerance and acceptance involve relating to each person in accordance to their culture, i. e. accepting the way they are. But to what extent is this practical? Collision of cultures is common in the current societies. The situation has necessities many people to learn the cultures of the rest of the people.

The traditional views on culture are fading away with new hybrid cultures, especially in urban centres cropping up. The people as they interact and try each other’s culture borrow what is good from each other’s culture and form a whole new culture with a completely new code of ethics. A cultural

relativist would argue that this upholds their initial position of culturally determined codes of ethics. However, such is doubtful if tolerance and acceptance fail. Nevertheless, it is impossible to have absolutely ethical standards that apply to a particular culture.

Cultural relativism is quickly dying owing to the fact that there are no longer isolated cultures in the world. In addition, all humans have inherent affiliations to what is good and what is bad. It is from this point of view that ethical relativism does not hold in the modern world. Generations have since abandoned what was traditionally ethical and formed other cultures. Such leads to the creation of an almost universal code of conduct that the whole world appreciates. Such is evidence by the universal international bodies such as amnesty international that tends to endorse universality in ethics. In addition, the society is developing in an almost same pattern and, therefore, cultural affiliations are becoming similar with time. In the near future, cultural relativism shall not be applicable at all.

2. Are the normative ethical theories of Mill, Kant, and Aristotle just for men and unsuitable for women? Does the care ethic entirely capture the moral reality of women? Examine the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and Carol Gilligan in light of these questions.

The normative theories of Kant, Mill, and Aristotle do not explicitly disadvantage women over men. There are several aspects that apply to all humans with total disregard to gender. In the case of Kantian ethics, for example, it advocates actions that lead to universal laws of nature. Universal laws of nature derived from human actions do not have gender affiliations. Therefore, whether the actions are from male or female that does not

matter. The morality of the action lies in the action rather than an actor. In addition, Kant proposed that humans should not treat others as means to an end, but treats them as an end themselves (“ Normative Ethical Principles and Theories: A Brief Overview,” 2002). Therefore, treatments in this case, all humans have an equal standing on the moral aspects. Kant also holds that every rational human being can produce the same universal principles. From this premises then, the theory is applicable in both men and women. On the other hand, Mill argues that all human ought to choose actions that lead to the happiness of the majority. As such, an act that does no benefit the majority is immoral while that which produces the benefits to the majority is moral. The theory is not specifying the gender it shall benefit. Therefore, such approach of ethics is universal in terms of gender. The rule utilitarianism, where the act is right if it agrees with preset rules does not discriminate either gender.

Mill notes that an act may be bad, but if its consequences are good, i. e. benefits the majority, then the act is moral (“ Normative Ethical Principles and Theories: A Brief Overview,” 2002). There is no differentiation on male or female, or even the roles they play in the society. Aristotle, in the Nicomachean ethics, suggests that human acts in pursuit of happiness must balance between desires and acquisition of the material goods (Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy, 2014). Humans act in order to attain happiness, and since there cannot be endless scenarios of happiness, the actor pursues the highest happiness. All these do not differentiate gender.

On the other hand, these normative ethics tends not to reflect the reality on the ground. The emphasis on individuals is more detrimental to women than

men. It is obvious that the society is made up of couples. This means that if each person pursues his or her happiness independently, then there are higher chances that the pursuit collides with that of the other person(s) in a family. Given that men have a higher hand in the running of the family; women would be compromised as men seek happiness to the detriment of the women. It is also evident that some of these theories are built on the experiences of men with disregard of women. For example, the contract model uses men experience only.

Owing to the fact that the society places women in a disadvantaged position in terms of social-economic aspects, the application of theories would follow the same trend in the society. The women also play different roles in the family, such as getting pregnant and performing other household chores. Such situations place the women in a precarious state in terms of morals. For example, the ethics surrounding abortion are entirely applicable in women and, therefore, the views of the women may be compromised by those of men even when a man does not play an equal role.

These issues are well articulated in the care-ethics that exclusively talks of the plight of women in ethics. It articulates the roles on women such as mothering, fostering the growth of the child, and training that is in most cases done by women. It is for these reasons that Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women had the right of education since they educated the young children. In addition to training or educating children, Mary further opines that educating women would strengthen marriages. An educated woman would understand the social contract she enters into with a man. She would also be able to argue well in the partnership and hence, maintain the

marriage that consequently leads to a better environment for educating children.

She also opposed the men's upper hand in the application of ethics where men are allowed to violate rules of chastity and fidelity. She argues that both men and women ought to observe both chastity and fidelity for a marriage to succeed. Gillian notes that men and women apply different ethical theories (Andre and Manuel Velasquez, n. d). Such occurs because men and women have different attachment levels. Women are inherent care-givers as opposed to men. Due to this, men would make ethical decisions basing on rights, equality, justice, and impartiality while women would in addition focus on the caring responsibility inherent in them. However, she notes that the perspectives are, in fact, complementary with each other. In this case, while a woman is making an ethical decision, the woman considers the justice rights, impartiality to some extent and the care-giving role to some extent. Such combine the two to come up with a hybrid sort of decisions.

In conclusion, the normative ethical theories tend to disregard the role played by women in the society. Such necessities the need of alternative views of ethics that would guide women as they play their role in the society to make the right ethical decisions.

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