

Legalizing medical
marijuana will have
more benefits to
society than
disadvantage...

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Legalizing Medical Marijuana will have more Benefits to Society than Disadvantages (Affiliation) Introduction Marijuana is a subject that has stirred, generated and dominated debates around the world for a very long time. It divides opinion everywhere, and its use is popular as it is unpopular. In some parts of the world, users are ridiculed and shunned, while in other parts they feel vindicated in their use of the drug, demonstrating a sense of comfort and a lack of guilt because it forms part of their societal fabric. In this paper I will employ the theories of cultural relativism and ethical subjectivism to discuss the issue of legalizing marijuana. In the process, I will explain and defend my position on this issue. Personally, I believe that medical marijuana should be legalized because it would be more beneficial to the society. The theory of cultural relativism is based on the simple fact that different societies have different moral codes, and it is therefore wrong to castigate someone because of his/her practices, behaviors or actions. These moral codes vary from one society to the other, a fact that makes difficult and unfair to judge anyone because a lot of things look and feel relative. For example, it is therefore unfair to judge someone for using marijuana, because there is a possibility that in his/her society it is totally acceptable. According to Sumner (2009), in most cultures right and wrong is judged according to societal values. On the other hand, the theory of ethical subjectivism claims that what we feel (moral reasoning) cannot be classified as right or wrong, because they are not factual (Stevenson, 2008). What we feel cannot therefore be used as a yardstick to tell right from wrong and hence criticize other people's actions and beliefs. For instance, just because I feel that medical marijuana should not be legalized does not give me the

right to criticize people who feel that it should be legalized. Those are merely feelings (Hume, 2009). I am of the opinion that these two theories provide us with a more insightful approach to the issues affecting the societies and cultures all over the world. I am also convinced that there is a lot to be gained from adopting the perspectives advanced in both theories. It is important to note that most conflicts around the world are as a result of intolerance to other cultures, societies and people. A majority of us are quick to criticize even the tiniest of issues, thus making others feel unwanted. This propagates a feeling of insecurity and pushes some people to assume a defensive stance at all times, always being ready to counter whatever is directed at them. Regardless of this, there are serious flaws to both arguments. The most obvious is that relativism and feelings cannot apply to everything. There are things that must be condemned at all costs, whether they are acceptable elsewhere or not. This means that the theory of cultural relativism cannot and should not be used as an excuse to tolerate and commit moral and societal ills; some practices, actions and beliefs must be outlawed universally because they are outdated. The biggest weakness in both theories is therefore that it is very easy to abuse their positions and assumptions in order to fulfill self-interests. For instance, a father in Africa, (especially in more traditional and conservative societies like the Maasai of East Africa) who marries off his underage daughter may argue that it is acceptable to do so in his society, but we all know that the rights of minors should be respected. Likewise, an individual who abuses drugs may feel vindicated for one reason or the other, but we are aware that if other people are affected by his actions then it is wrong for him to abuse drugs. The

liberal nature of the two theories, combined with the failure to state firm positions and perspectives is their major weakness. My argument and position is that medical marijuana should be legalized because it is more beneficial to the society. Nowadays, so many people are affected by illnesses that subject them to pain and suffering. This is exacerbated by the fact that drugs and treatments required to alleviate the effects of those illnesses (most of them are terminal, for example cancer and HIV/AIDS) are expensive and unavailable to the poor or the illiterate. Medical marijuana would provide a much cheaper and readily available option to the costly treatments offered. Apart from this, it has been established that the side effects are minimal in comparison to conventional drugs, therapies and treatments (Ferguson, 2010). Moreover, most people are familiar with marijuana, and therefore would be willing to accept it as a form of treatment. The main objective to my opinion is that marijuana is illegal, and medical marijuana is no different from marijuana itself. By legalizing it, criminal activities associated with the drug would be inadvertently promoted, hence putting more people at risk. In addition to this, the idea of legalizing medical marijuana would put governments everywhere under immense pressure to legalize the sale and use of the drug. This would be unfair to the millions of people who have been victims of marijuana either through its use or sale. I will answer these objections by stating that it would be even more beneficial to legalize marijuana. Although its effects are minimal compared to those of cigarettes and other hard drugs, negative portrayal has led to a negative perception. At the same time, criminal activities associated with marijuana are fewer and tolerable when compared to other drugs like cocaine and

heroin. However, the legalization of medical marijuana would inevitably warrant the enactment of proper and relevant legislations to regulate its administration and use, and therefore it would be just as secure and acceptable as other medical therapies and treatments. Conclusion The theories of cultural relativism and ethical subjectivism allow us to give people the benefit of doubt in terms of their practices, actions, utterances, beliefs and traditions. They combine the notion that it is impossible and unfair to judge what is wrong and what is right because both aspects are relative. They may be just feelings, as claimed in ethical subjectivism, or they may be variable as stated in cultural relativism. In this paper I have examined and defended the statement that the legalization of medical marijuana will be more positive than negative. As is evident in the paper, I have applied both theories in my argument. I believe that medical marijuana should be legalized because it would be more beneficial to the society. I also believe that it is illogical to dedicate so much time and money to fighting the use and sale of marijuana when there are more dangerous drugs and ills that need to be tackled. The fact that its usage is still high (and rising) shows that those efforts are ineffective, add to this the fact that its effects are mild compared to other hard drugs. Medical marijuana is perhaps the only hope for terminally ill people who cannot afford other treatments and who prefer marijuana to conventional drugs. References Hume, D., Bigge, L. A., & Nidditch, P. H. (2009). *A treatise of human nature* (4th ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press. Rachels, J., & Rachels, S. (2010). *The elements of moral philosophy* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education. Stevenson, C. L. (2008). *Ethics and language* (5th ed.) New Haven: Yale University Press.

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