

A discussion between two characters--about moral relativism

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A discussion between two characters- About moral relativism Ethics, a set of rules in a society that regulates people's behaviour by defining wrongs and rights in a society, is a fundamental aspect of people's behaviour. Different ethical theories exist to explain people's behaviours and to offer general rules towards a more cohesive society. Relativism is one of the available ethical theories and I, in this paper, write a dialogue between two individuals, James and Jenifer, about ethical relativism. Jenifer: The relativism approach to ethics is an interesting and confusing one because it seems to blur the clarity in defining a wrong or a right but does not affect determinants of scopes of action. It is however a good ethical approach that understand conditions into actions. What is your perception on factors such as manners, etiquette, and the law? Are your definitions consistent with the relativism's approach to determination of ethics? James: Many people concur with your opinion that relativism is a controversial approach to ethics and only people who purpose to justify their otherwise seemingly immoral acts express comfort with the theory. Manners define people's approach to doing things and should be understood from a macro-social perspective with concepts of cultural values. This means that manners should fairly be constant over a period in a society and identify a significant level of absoluteness in defining wrongs and rights. My understanding of etiquette also involves a macro-social concept that defines courteous behaviours among members of a society or a group of individuals and relies on the group's common and fundamental values. The law however defines a set of rules that are developed and accepted to govern a society or a section of a society and remains absolute until they are changed through formally recognized

mechanisms in the subject societies. Like law, ethics define a set of moral rules that are based on social values and are fundamental to influencing people's behaviours through. Such values are derived from culture and are passed across generations to ensure consistent values across generations. I therefore understand absoluteness in these terms and their consistency across time. This means that the constructs do not support the scope of relativism ethics (Harman 1-2). Jenifer: I however believe that these factors are not absolute the relativism ethics is valid. I also believe that some conditions may restrict a person's options and force implementation of unpopular decision or action. Do you think that such conditions may relieve a person of ethical obligation to justify a wrong? James: Conditions may dictate an individual's options but never limit such options to a single option that is also unethical. This is because an option always exists for acts of omission or commission and the ability to sacrifice self-interest plays a significant role in identification of diversified alternative conditions. Such conditions should therefore not be used to justify wrongs because they do not eliminate better alternatives (Harman 3). Jenifer: We seem to disagree over the relativism ethical theory. Do you support the position that all moral claims are absolute? James: Definition of absoluteness of a moral claim is in itself relative and should therefore be understood with significant degree of care. Cultural values define morality and moral claims and these claims will therefore be different from one society to another. The claims are however expected to be absolute with a society. Consequently, moral claims within a given society are absolute but the claims are relative to different communities. This is the anti relativist reality claim (Harman 5). Jenifer: This

claim may be true but is the source of confusion in the globalized environment where cultures interlink and people may be influenced by foreign cultures. Do you however think that a relativist can say, without contradiction, that anything is wrong? James: A relativist's position associates with a general existence of contradiction because of its situational approach to issues. One approach is implemented to establish right in an act while another position can be implemented to identify the wrong in an act depending on a relativist's position at a time. These positions therefore mean existence of contradiction to every situation (Harman 3- 5). Jenifer: A relativist may however be particular to situation and therefore specific on morality in an act. Will this still identify contradiction? James: It may seem to be specific in the short run but in the end establish a contradiction when the person gets convinced that an alternative is right and the formally adopted position was wrong. Understanding the scope of relativist theory should be sensitive to time. Jenifer: Assuming that relativism is real, especially with its moral impacts of justifying actions, can you agree with my position that relativism is true for societies and sub societies in as much as it is true for individuals? James: Relativism may be true for individuals but it is not true for cultures because cultures do not change but can however be replaced (Harman 3). Works Cited Harman, Gilbert. "Moral relativism explained." Princeton University. June 19, 2012. Web. 28 Apr. 2013. < http://www.princeton.edu/~harman/Papers/Moral_Relativism.pdf>.