

# Analysis of the feasibility of cultural relativity, ethical subjectivism

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The cultural relativity argument is based upon the following premises. (1) Societies differ in their standards of rationality on both empirical and normative aspects. (2) What counts as an empirical fact and a social fact and the bases by which societies were able to judge them as such are said to vary across societies. (3) Rationality is deeply intertwined with our cognition of the world. (4) Facts do not go beyond our capacity to know.

Such assumptions lead to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a common body of social fact that corresponds to a shared human standard of cognition. If such is the case, it therefore follows that there are several bodies of fact each relative to the standards valid to the society in question. In relation to this James Rachel contends that a minimum conception of rationality requires that “ we try to guide our conduct by reason while giving equal weight to the interests of each individual” (qtd in McNiven 131).

The possibility of such is evident if one considers that (1) moral judgments must be based upon good reasons and (2) morality requires “ the impartial consideration of each individual’s interests” (McNiven 131). If such is the case, it thereby follows that since a relativistic world view is based upon a conception of relative standards for the validation of social views hence a relativistic framework assumes that the different conceptions of morality [since these must necessarily be based upon the structural framework of a culture].

If such is the case, such a perspective thereby fails to adhere to the second provision of a minimal conception of reality, which gives credence on the aspect of impartiality. It follows from this that cultural relativism thereby fails to meet the standards of a minimum conception of morality.

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2. During the last twenty years or so, a number of ethicists have found some value in ethical subjectivism, despite its flaws. How might some of its assumptions be helpful in making moral decisions?

Ethical subjectivism is based on the assumptions that (1) there are no valid grounds to support the notion of the existence of objective moral truths and (2) moral conceptions of right and wrong are relative in nature (Mills and Polanowski 134). In a sense, ethical subjectivism may thereby be seen as enabling the renunciation of moral absolutism, which is based on the assumption that reason stands as the grounds for the formation of moral judgments.

David Hume contends that such a perspective fails to account for the influence of desire in the formation of moral judgment. In relation to this, Mills and Polanowski contend that such an assumption shows the manner in which “moral ideals achieve their reality only within consciousness as the subjective product of moral valuation” (137). The importance of such is evident if one considers instances wherein rationality decrees the elimination of life whereas subjective morality opts for enabling the continuance of life [e. g. cases of euthanasia].

3. Gregory Pence claims the arguments against SCNT are weak. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Gregory Pence claims that creating an embryo through the process of somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) is deemed as problematic due to the possible harm that it may cause. Such possible harms range from those considered as enabling “harms to society or the institutions of the family”

(Pence 77). The main concern however lies in its effects upon the child [physical harm as a product of birth defect and psychological harm], which is a product of the aforementioned method.

At the onset, it is important to note that such harms are based upon preconceived and invalidated conceptions of possible outcomes in the future. In a sense, they may be considered as somewhat fictitious projections of possible occurrences as a result of a particular methodology that has resemblance to other methodologies that enabled or caused physical or psychological harm upon an entity. Pence, thereby argues that he failure of the aforementioned criticism may be traced to their assumption of either of the similarity of SCNT to other methodologies [e. g. cloning] which has led to the harm of entities or to the assumption that such a process will scar a child. Such assumptions [against SCNY], however, as I reckon fails to consider Pence's arguments.

#### Works Cited

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Mills, Jon and Janusz Polanowski. *The Ontology of Prejudice*. U. S. A.: Rodopi, 1997.

Pence, Gregory. *Brave New Bioethics*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.