Religion and Ethics in Relation to Subjective Claims

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Introduction

The difference between truth and false is always considered to be an easy difference to make. If anyone lies about something, anything he says will be implied as false; if he is telling the truth, it will be true. This is one of the huge misconceptions in life. The difference between truth and false is immense. The answer to distinguishing between truth and false is most logically given as the correct fact is true and an incorrect statement is false. However, the answer totally depends on the knowledge of that person related to the topic in discussion and how he perceived the question.

Similarly, there are opinions and facts. An opinion is the person's own perception about the topic, and it is given to the best of knowledge of that person and how he thinks about it based on his acceptance or negation of the issue fact however, it is based on the exact result of actual events, irrespective of how anyone perceives it. Based upon the results of a known fact, a person may choose to make a personal claim, which can be proved right or wrong based on the correct implication of that fact. There exist methods and criteria for determining whether the claim is right or wrong. However, A subjective claim cannot be proved right or wrong as it is based on the person's beliefs, preferences, opinions, or perceptions.

When a person holds some beliefs, values, and practices about a culture, his viewpoint of that culture is called Cultural Relativism, and when he is judged on a specific event or fact, his moral judgment will be based on the reaction that he gives related to that event, this judgment is called Ethical Subjectivism.

Discussion

(Part A)

While debating religion and ethics, we come to hear people saying, "It is your own opinion." This statement means that the person holds a personal response and claim on that topic and considers himself free to deliver his opinion (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2026).

While calling something an opinion, a person usually contrasts it with some real events, and those real events are called facts. Philosophers explain this difference by identifying facts as actual occurrences of the world regardless of what anyone thinks about them – and opinions as personal beliefs about that event. To quickly identify opinions and facts we can apply the Perry Weddle method, in which we ask for the person who claims it. If it is a fact, it won't belong to a specific person or group of persons and will be accepted globally, while, if it is an opinion, it will relate to some people, and they will use it to describe their own perception of the claim.

This method, however, cannot be applied in every case as there is a vague margin between what can be implied as an opinion and what is fact. There are some events that some people will declare as fact and some as opinions. This gives rise to the concept of objective claims and subjective claims. The claims made by people can be of two types: either they can be proved by some globally accepted reality, or they can't. Some examples explain these concepts. For example, there are different claims on the origin of life; some people believe the fact that life originated from life and that the first form of life was created as life. This theory is called "Bio-genesis", the supporters of this belief declare this claim as fact and accept it as an exact event, On the other hand, there were some people who believe the origin of life from non-life or "A-Biogenesis", those who accept it as a fact base their beliefs on this theory and consider it as non-negotiable. These two claims are considered subjective, respected, and accepted, as no research has proven them wrong. The objective claim, on the other hand, is a claim that can be proved by some factual reality. Considering the same example, if, in some years, scientific research answers the question about the origin of life, this research will be accepted as a fact in the whole world. After the acceptance of this research if a person claims in favor of this research his claim can be proved by the help of that scientific research and can be declared as true, and if a person claims against it, he can also be proved wrong by giving the reference to that fact, and will eventually be proven as wrong. Both of these claims will be considered objective as there exist facts that can prove them either true or false.

Cultural Relativism

The key to understanding morality has been the observation that different cultures have different morality. Most people reject the idea of universal truth as a myth and refer to it as a subjective issue. According to this claim, the customs practiced by a culture cannot be declared correct or incorrect and should not be judged over any selection. It is the moral code of the society that within the society determines the right or wrong nature of that act.

There exist arguments both in favor and against Cultural Relativism which are described below:

Arguments in favor

- Different cultures have different moral codes and they should be respected.
- Right and wrong are subjective and they vary from culture to culture.

- If people from different cultures have different moralities related to an event, they shouldn't be objectified by their choice, as they have the right to accept that code.
- In a multicultural society, staying tolerant and not objectifying others to avoid feuds is better.

Arguments against

- If cultural relativism is accepted, it will mitigate the difference between right and wrong.
- It will prohibit cultural improvement if needed, like the improvement many people tried to deliver, like Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Jesus Christ, and Martin Luther King.
- It will allow everyone to act as per his will and while doing so they people might start hurting each other physically or morally. And no one has the right to harm anyone based on what he or she believes.

Ethical Subjectivism

Ethical subjectivism suggests that there should be no objective moral values, as they can never be accepted as facts and are not based on universal truths. Instead, ethical practices are considered true or false based on the attitude and actions the people deliver based on that ethical morality. An Ethical Subjectivist may argue about something he really hates, but it does not imply the thing itself is hateful or wrong; another person who negates this thinking is not making an intellectual mistake but holds a different opinion and a different morality (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2026).

Ethical Subjectivism plays a major role in deciding the emotional response of a society. There is a direct relation between decisions made under morality and the emotions that are caused by it. If a person acts unethically within cultural bounds, he is likely to receive disgust, hate, anger, or, in extreme cases, societal punishment. It may give rise to emotions even within the person, like shame, guilt, and embarrassment. On the other hand, acting ethically gives rise to positive emotions towards that person, like love, gratitude, admiration, and even empathy that motivates people to perform in social activities (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2026).

In my opinion, cultural relativism refrains a community to decide between good and evil. The difference between good and evil is not subjective, and it should be accepted as objective. Freedom is everyone's basic right, but it restricts us from taking actions that revoke others' freedom. Any person who takes cultural relativism seriously loses the ability to accept positive change and turns into a mindless animal who is incapable of finding meaning in life.

(Part B)

The implication of the statement "If God is dead, everything is permitted" is an extreme view, accepted by the atheist group. It implies that morality is strictly dependent on divinity and it cannot

be justified in other ways. This statement links God and morality in such a way that if God is no more, then no one is bound to perform ethically, and there is nothing left as “morally right or wrong.” This theory in which for anything to be morally correct is by default the command of God is called Divine Command Theory.

Divine Command Theory

The Divine command theory is an ethical view developed by the believers of Divinity. Its followers accept that all morality comes from God. The believers of this theory give reference to their holy books (Quran, Bible, and Torah). The idea that religion and ethics are connected leads to explaining religion’s role in developing morality. This theory provides an ethical framework that can set moral values in a society. The believers of this theory accept that God is eternal and that to follow His commands, we will have to follow the rules He made in the holy books.

God’s commands never depend on what anyone thinks about them; they are unobjectionable and must be followed in any case. If a community decides killing is moral behavior, it cannot be accepted as it directly conflicts with God’s commandments (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2025b).

Everyone who disobeys God will be accountable for it, and no power can restrict God from taking this action. Similarly, if God wants to reward anyone, He can and will, and no one can question His distribution of favors. Those who believe in this theory have strong references to these holy books to support their claim (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2025b).

The reference to God’s sovereignty dates back to the origin of life on this earth and even before the existence of time itself. The holy books teach us strict rules for maintaining a peaceful world.

Criticism

A minority of people object to this theory. One major objection is the interpretation of God in different religions. The objection is based on the number of religions and how to check if the commandments in any specific book are correct to follow, as there have been many variations in the content of these books.

God’s commands can be misinterpreted as not all people on earth have equal intelligence and ability to understand a commandment. God’s commandments against murder and killing are common in all holy books. Still, there are references to events where God ordered killing and violence as a cure for injustice and extremism. Though those commandments are clear and scenario, the critiques use them as a point to justify that immorality is not linked to God.

The Natural Law Theory

The Natural Law theory is a moral theory of jurisprudence. This theory suggests that law should be based on morality and ethics. And what is then accepted by Natural Law will be accepted as right and wrong. This law finds its power by referring to certain universally accepted standards of morality and ethics. The Natural Law theory claims that laws are inherited from nature and are to be followed regardless of the obligations made by a government, whether or not the laws of the government are according to these laws or not. Divine laws are inspired by principles made by God (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2025b).

The difficulties that arise in following natural law theory are basically because there is no general acceptance of this law as effective in political, moral, and ethical correctness. It is sometimes interpreted as far from the operations of a judicial structure. However, this point can be marked invalid as natural law obliges its followers not to act against the present government (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2025a).

In my opinion, the divine command theory is more logical and correct and provides a better structure for an ethically correct community. It gives the construction and implementation of a coherent and good ethical environment. However, one should consider the relation between this theory and its philosophical merits. Most people follow this theory because it is accurate and relevant to epistemic, aesthetic, and metaphysically correctness to develop a sustainable and comprehensive society.

Conclusion

Accepting a theory can help our interpretations flourish and provide us with meaning to look at certain facts. Facts are needed to develop truthful theories about morality and ethics and apply them in our society. Correct interpretations are, however, necessary to make factual propositions. These theories, in turn, help us to make sense of the facts that are giving rise to them. Definitions of these facts are subsets of these truths that have been verified. We can conclude that facts without a supporting theory are meaningless and difficult to accept (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2024).

References

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