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Elements in Ethics

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MORAL RELATIVISM AND PLURALISM

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Moral Relativism and Pluralism

Elements in Ethics

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Abstract: The argument for metaethical relativism, the view that there is no single true or most justified morality, is that it is part of the best explanation of the most difficult moral disagreements. The argument for this view features a comparison between traditions that highly value relationship and community and traditions that highly value personal autonomy of the individual and rights. It is held that moralities are best understood as emerging from human culture in response to the need to promote and regulate interpersonal cooperation and internal motivational coherence in the individual. The argument ends in the conclusion that there is a bounded plurality of true and most justified moralities that accomplish these functions. The normative implications of this form of metaethical relativism are explored, with specific focus on female genital cutting and abortion.

Keywords: moral relativism, ethical theory, comparative philosophy, normative ethics, naturalistic ethics

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