

Glossary

Absolutism

While there is not one strict school of philosophy for absolutism the idea can be applied in the argument of subjective vs. objective. Absolutism implies just that, that there are absolutes, that facts can be discovered in existence that are universal. Hence it is also known as universalism.

Aesthetics

While it can be seen in quite a broad term as the reflection on art, culture and nature as Wikipedia phrases it, aesthetics generally refers to the perception of something regarding its beauty and sentiment.

Euthanasia

While there are slight variations in the definition of Euthanasia it is concerned with helping someone else to die or “assisted suicide.” This is generally considered to be through medical help. It is illegal in most countries but not all (most notably more liberal countries such as Holland now allow such mercy killings).

Humanism

Humanism represents a broad scope of belief systems which are centred on the idea of believing in humans – that is asserting the dignity and believing in the well being of humans. Or to put it a far better way, believing you can live a good and fulfilling life caring about your fellow man without need for the supernatural.

Inherent

Something that is an inseparable or an integral part of something or someone. For example you could say water is inherently wet or killing is inherently evil (whether you actually believe this is a whole different matter, it simply illustrates the point).

Materialism

This can mean a number of things. In its wider form materialism refers to the idea that the only thing that can be shown to be real is matter. In its social context for example someone being described as a “materialist” it refers to someone who is more concerned with material items than of spiritual issues.

Nihilist

Nihilism suggests that existence is without purpose, meaning or value. It basically says that life is meaningless. Nihilists generally believe there is no higher ruler or creator and there is no objective truth.

Objective

Something that is independent of people's opinion, such as a fact. Something that is objective does not vary from person to person. For example, the first day of the year is 1 January. This is true for everyone. Objective can also refer to opinions that are unbiased to either such, for example a judge should always be objective.

Relativism

The idea that some experience or even fact can vary from person to person or dependent on the situation. For example people may have different but equally valid ethical positions (at least from the point of view of relativism) or that an action may be ethical in one situation but unethical in another.

Solipsist

Solipsism refers to the philosophical idea that your mind is the only thing that you know exists. The most common application of this idea is that nobody else exists and your mind is seemingly creating the world that you experience.

Subjective

Something that can vary from person to person, it exists in the mind rather than being an objective fact. For example, I am cold or I think that the meaning of life is to be a good person. In each of these situations one person can believe something, one person can believe something else and yet they can both be true. I can be cold, someone else can be warm and both of these facts can be true at the same time.

Utopia

The original meaning of Utopia was a place in a fictional novel but has now become to represent the ideal or perfect society.