

The Meaning of Integrity in Postmodernism

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze the concept of integrity, how it should be defined, the importance of the concept throughout history, and whether or not the concept of integrity is still relevant in a postmodern world. Integrity, derived from the Latin word “integer,” which reflects wholeness and moral completeness, is traditionally defined as following moral and ethical principles and being consistent and honest. In the paper, we explore how Job, Ruth, and Daniel are just three examples of individuals who stood in their integrity despite losing jobs, family members, homes, and even their own lives. The influence of postmodern relativism on truth and morality is then analyzed, and it is shown how this contemporary philosophical trend has shaped a notably situational definition of integrity. It ends by asserting the timeless relevance of integrity in today’s world despite the obstacles of mediated notions of morality and identity politics that accompany contemporary life.

Key words: Integrity, Postmodernism, Truthfulness, Honesty, Morality

INTRODUCTION

Ethics refers to the quality of being integrated regarding moral values and conduct. In its etymological sense, integrity is derived from the Latin integer, which means whole or complete. In contrast, in a moral sense, it refers to a principle of right actions and character. Webster defines it as the rigid observance of rules of morality and purity, wholeness, and soundness.¹ Such integrity can be illustrated by historical biblical characters like Job, Joseph, Daniel, and others, who have shown a solid commitment to ethical standards and principles at significant personal cost.² The postmodern period has significantly impacted the understanding of truth and morality, leading to a relativistic outlook that questions the conventional notion of integrity. This perspective emphasizes the relative and situational nature of identity and morality, resulting in a new perspective on the expectation of integrity. This paper analyzes the definition of integrity, evaluating it in historical and biblical contexts and examining how relativism shapes postmodern ideologies and identity fluidity. The paper concludes by discussing the continued relevancy of integrity and the formidable challenge a mediated moral perspective presents in further shaping the synthesis of modern moral vision.

Overall, the article uses a conceptual and analytical method for examining integrity. It begins with a well-defined definition of integrity streamlined to its etymological origins and traditional and historical contexts. This author makes a philosophical case for integrity, referring even to old philosophies wrought with counsel like virtue ethics. He also references the Bible, giving examples of how integrity looks in everyday moments that we face today.

¹Philip Babcock Gove, ed., Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993), s.v. “Integrity”; William Allan Neilson, Thomas A. Knott, and Paul W. Carhart, eds., Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, 2nd ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1959), s.v. “Integrity.”

²The Holy Bible: New International Version, ed. Zondervan (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

The Meaning of Integrity

Traditional Definition

Traditionally, integrity refers to the ability to follow the legal system of ethical standards and norms, coupled with meaningful and ethical consistency and truthfulness. The term is derived from the Latin word *integer*, meaning whole or complete.³ This etymology underscores the concept's core implication. Integrity is, therefore, the state of having a single and unambiguous moral model that one follows. R. C. Roberts agrees with Webster's etymology; he contends that one is said to have integrity when he or she is complete and can resist hostile moral forces such as temptation, suffering, peer pressure, and other vices.⁴ This etymology underscores the concept's core implication. Integrity is, therefore, the state of having a single and unambiguous moral model that one follows. The concept of integration points to the reality that integrity is not an exclusive state of affairs but an inside job, in one sense, an inside and outside job, in that everyone must live a life congruent with the set deontological principles.

Most of the time, integrity is associated with ethical character. It suggests compliance with the code as definite and unchanging, regardless of the present situations or pressures. For example, Aristotle's virtue ethics hold that there is one central virtue: Integrity, which is a mean between two vices.⁵ The virtue ethics approach emphasizes the importance of practicing virtues like courage, honesty, and justice to avoid vice. Integrity, conversely, is the absence of complexity and a rigid sense of ethical conduct. It means that actions must correspond to words and vice versa, and this alignment is crucial in various aspects of life, family, the workplace, and society. In the professional world, integrity involves being truthful, delivering what one promises, and observing etiquette. In interpersonal relationships, integrity includes honesty and punctuality to build credibility. The traditional understanding of integrity assumes that moral benchmarks are stable and invariant, with ethics incorporated into people as elites and as a foundation for their actions and choices. This view emphasizes dependability and the ethical character of an individual.

Integrity in Historical and Biblical Contexts

Integrity has been explained using historical and biblical examples that detail its understanding, therapeutic value, and meaning. Some of the best examples of integrity that translate into practice can be gleaned from biblical stories showing how men and women of integrity upheld their principles even in the face of extraordinary difficulties. For instance, the story of Ruth's loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi, is a powerful example of integrity in action despite their hardships. Their resilience in the face of adversity is truly inspiring.

In most Hebrew Bible literature, integrity can be translated as faithfulness or righteousness. The Book of Job is the best example of the above concept. Job is presented as a righteous man who endures excellent pain and agonizing losses but remains faithful to God. According to Matthews, this concept is rightly emphasized in the sayings of Jesus Christ in the gospel: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁶ Nonetheless, biblical integrity can be considered consistent in defending moral principles and not cursing God in pain based on a personal friend's accusations. The plot of Job's story points out that integrity means a steadfast adherence to a moral principle when the odds are against you.

Joseph must also be taken as an example of the principle of integrity from the book of Genesis. Ever since his brothers sold him into slavery, he loses himself by being almost raped by his master's wife, but he remains as

³Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Integrity," last modified July 26, 2021.

⁴R. C. Roberts, "Character," *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, ed. David John Atkinson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 65.

⁵Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶Matt 5:48.

pure as ever and does not compromise his integrity. His dedication to his principles, even in the face of such adversity, is a powerful demonstration of the strength of his integrity.⁷

Daniel, another biblical character, is a man of integrity who followed his faith and religious practices despite tremendous persecution. When it was decreed that everybody should bow to no god but the king, Daniel went on to pray to God as he was a man of principle and faith.⁸ These timelines and biblical teachings infest the idea that integrity encompasses a greater extent of safeguarding one's polity than merely being disciplined to hold on to moral standards. They highlight that integrity is closely tied to faith, dedication, and adherence to one's principles when things get tough. Cultural and theological perspectives emphasize the unchanging view of the ethic of integrity, stating that it goes beyond individual character and ethical standards, encompassing a commitment to moral principles that guide actions and decisions in the face of adversity.

Biblical integrity is ultimately based on divine commandments, a framework of moral absolutes. In the Bible, integrity is closely associated with righteousness, honesty, and truthfulness in God's word. For instance, in Proverbs 10:9, 'Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.' This shows us how to be upfront and honest, causing one to never worry and sleep peacefully at night.

In contrast, postmodernism offers a more relativistic view of truth and morality. A postmodern framework might argue that integrity is subjective, applied differently, and has varying meanings based on one's culture, religious beliefs, and ethical/moral beliefs. This assertion challenges the stability of absolutes, describing how what may undergird the belief systems of one person may not be as fundamental in another. However, the postmodern approach is crucial in enriching our understanding of integrity, engaging us in a complex dialogue.

On the one hand, Biblical integrity presents a constant moral compass guided by external, often sacred, principles. In malleable integrity, however, one might get lost in the gray areas of personal and cultural morals and concentrate on how true to oneself we are in being and doing versus filling out the answers of a standard moral code. However, what does this juxtaposition raise regarding accountability, ethical behavior, and community standards?

The biblical view is very accurate regarding how we ought to live. However, the postmodern approach brings us to the next level of wrestling with how our different backgrounds factor into what living a life of integrity looks like. Ultimately, the conversation between them should open up a more exciting dialogue about honesty, the role of honesty in trustworthiness, and moral character in an increasingly flawed world.

Integrity in Contrast to Postmodern Ideologies

This study explores the concept of integrity in the context of postmodernism, focusing on its steadfast philosophical orientations and challenges. It probes how a postmodern, multicultural, and pluralistic approach to conveying the concept of integrity could not reconcile with postmodern values. By examining the opportunities and challenges presented by postmodernism, it aims to articulate and promote the concept of integrity in a postmodern age.

Postmodernism Overview

Postmodernism is a sociocultural paradigm that critiques modernist philosophies by critiquing meta-narratives and single-truth concepts. It challenges the idea of science and reason as the foundations of modernism, emphasizing knowledge acquisition through science and reason. Postmodernism embraces relativism of knowledge and truth, arguing that they are socially constructed realities mediated by cultural, historical, and linguistic practices. It does not subscribe to the idea of 'the truth' but acknowledges multiple truths and stories.

⁷Genesis 37-50, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁸Daniel 6:10, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford University Press, 2018).

Postmodernism challenges reductionist metanarratives by highlighting the pluralism of voices and the role of language and power within culture. This skepticism extends to ethical-moral reality, which is considered relative and objectified. Postmodernism is a comprehensive and diverse approach to considering the real world.

Postmodern Challenges to Traditional Integrity

Previous definitions of integrity mainly encompass strict compliance with ethical standards and always being ethical. Integrity is seen as a strict adherence to a set of values that determines the actions of an individual regardless of the external circumstances. A significant problem of postmodernism is thus skepticism about universal moral truths. According to the postmodernists, ethical values are not universal but are influenced by sociocultural environments.⁹ The relativistic view of ethics suggests that right or wrong can vary across cultures or societies, making the concept of a single standard of integrity complex.

In postmodern thought, the idea of truth as an objective reality waiting to be discovered is challenged. This view fundamentally challenges the belief system of objective truth, where what we term "truth" is a construct created by our experiences, beliefs, and societal factors. For example, the way truth is expressed can vary widely, even at a cultural or community level, creating an understanding that our perception is ultimately subjective. This means that histories, narratives, and knowledge are conditioned by the contexts in which they are constructed.¹⁰ Postmodernism offers a counter-idea of many truths, pointing out that each person, or group of people, has its perspectives based on their backgrounds and context. This plurality of truths accepts various narratives and positions in the world. It gently reminds us that truth often comes from digging more, knowing that there are different perspectives and that human life can be complicated.

Postmodernists argue that moral decisions are influenced by individual, culture, or context. This approach undermines the coherence of the self, which is essential for maintaining integrity. Mainstream integrity assumes a coherent moral subject with appropriate actions. However, postmodern identity is incoherent and shifting, constructed through social factors and discourses. This means individuals have conflicting selves, and moral tendencies can change depending on the situation.

Consequently, reconciling relativism with maintaining integrity within a postmodern framework could be challenging. The postmodern approach rejects the idea of objective truth and ethical principles as empirical fiction. Knowledge is constructed and depends on power, and integrity is not an objective concept that can be defined in all cultures. Instead, it operates within a system of value priorities and points of view.

Integrity in the Postmodern World

Does integrity in the postmodern value system fit the relativistic and pluralistic paradigm? Postmodernism does not view integrity as always adhering to universal moral rules or principles. Instead, it can be understood as accepting different worldviews and not being the same person. Integrity in postmodernism involves being honest about one's values and beliefs while being sensitive to contextual conditions without compromise. It is about conforming to clear guidelines like a moral absolutist while acting ethically based on current knowledge. This interpretation of integrity is about adhering to clear universal guidelines and acting ethically based on contextual current knowledge without compromise.

A second element of the postmodernist definition process is understanding negotiating and dialogical ethics. Dating back to postmodernism, the question of integrity is posed far more frequently than one can assert on the uniform moral truth. This is a more active way to define integrity, where ethical reflections and behaviors are performed and do not change depending on circumstances and views. Postmodernism's defining trait is its skepticism about metanarratives and transcendent truths, which have historically been important to ethical frameworks. Postmodernism is often dominated by subjective truths, where one person's truth may not be the

⁹Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon Books, 1972.

¹⁰Norman k. Denzin "Postmodern Social Theory" *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 4, No 2 (Autumn, 1986), 194-204.

same as another because each individual's truth has been shaped by their own experiences, cultures, and environments. It opens the readers and audiences to hear an interpretation from different roads, which can challenge the perception of some moral values.¹¹

One of the aspects of postmodernism that may not prove beneficial in everyday life is relativism, which can be a danger to integrity. We train our minds to apply integrity consistently, only to discover that they have lost it at the first thought of relativity. Such ambiguity is dangerous because it can create qualitative differences between behavior and values that are not necessarily justified by the differences in context. This, in turn, means that the postmodern stress on subjectivity can drag down personal, social, and national commitments to integrity, making it harder to approach moral questions with a good sense of right and wrong.

Additionally, postmodernist ideas about the critique of power and language can develop a greater appreciation of integrity, including social relations and power structures. This perspective makes integrity mean not only the individual's moral standing as an ethic but also the interaction of the culture with the morality of the society and power relations. In this way, acknowledging such factors, people can work for integrity, reconciled with the fact that business processes are inevitably embedded in social contexts and are characterized by unequal relations. The friction between postmodernism and integrity clarifies vital questions about the place of mission in the modern age. How can one develop a sense of integrity in the face of relativism? The interaction of these ideas opens up questions on how we might form ethical principles considering individual differences without compromising the meaningful discourse on integrity.

Implications of the Concept of Integrity for Real-world, Postmodern Practice

Managing integrity from a postmodern perspective does not mean expanding the principles of ethics to the context of a globalized world. This concept aligns with most conventional approaches, which have deterministic foundations and a fixed set of norms that must be followed. This change from the postmodern ideal calls for an extended understanding of remaining ethical across workplace and interpersonal domains.

Professional Settings

In postmodern professional environments, parity is measured by maintaining personal ethics while working under complex norms. Traditional concepts of integrity, such as compliance with rules, must be maintained to maintain best business practices to address postmodern issues. Integrity works succinctly in these contexts to ensure fairness and equity. Ethical deliberation in multicultural organizations requires considering impartiality, such as the clash between profit-making, social responsibility, and justice. This approach helps navigate the challenges of modern business environments where the powerful take advantage of the less privileged. For integrity to be applied appropriately, leaders must participate in reflective activities, evaluate how particular decisions affect the diverse stakeholders, and attempt to conform to the organizational behavior of the two.¹² In this way, ethical concerns are not excluded in the decision-making process, but rather, the process is balanced to respond to the postmodern relativistic ideology. Maintaining integrity in a rapidly changing environment can be challenging, but several practical strategies can help individuals and organizations uphold their values and ethical standards. We can encourage open communication by discussing openly among the team and fostering an environment where people can voice concerns/thoughts/feedback. This proactive approach empowers us to identify ethical issues early, giving us more control over our ethical standards.

Transparency and accountability are crucial in postmodern organizations, as they emphasize pluralism and the recognition of the differences within the organization. Employees and professionals must justify their actions and decisions, fostering trust and constantly scrutinizing ethical practices. In today's fast-changing workplaces, professional stability is essential to maintain integrity. Managers must respond to the changing social culture and norms while maintaining professionalism and integrity in treating people. Maintainability and inflexibility

¹¹Ben Agger, *Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance*. Annual Review of Sociology. Vol. 17 (1991), pp. 105-131.

¹²Hofstede, Geert. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

are critical factors in ensuring integrity in the fast-changing workplace.¹³ Ethical leadership in a postmodern context involves ethical decision-making and behavior, promoting a pluralistic organization's ethical culture. Ethical leadership is essential for maintaining integrity in a rapidly changing workplace.

We can promote ethical decision-making by providing training and resources that assist people in making ethical decisions. Guiding how to assess situations and make decisions will also give employees the strength to act with integrity during grey areas. It is essential to frequently review and adapt policies and practices to remain faithful to one's core values in a rapidly changing environment. It is also helpful to see how past decisions and actions helped and hindered team members' further development. Establishing solid relationships rooted in trust between teams and stakeholders is essential to encourage a friendly atmosphere. People who feel valued and respected are more likely to maintain integrity in how they appear in other people's lives.

Personal Relationships

Integrity is crucial in personal relationships, encompassing sameness, honesty, and impulse control. Postmodern thinking values freedom and cultural variability in interactions, while prescriptiveness defines moralistic rules. Integrity is essential in personal relationships; interactions often contain limited truth-telling, highlighting the need for a more conformed understanding of cultural differences while maintaining integrity to preserve equity in a pluralistic world. It means expressing oneself openly and freely regarding one's emotions, principles, and choices and being open-minded concerning other people's feelings, ideas, and demands.¹⁴ Thus, for example, integrity in friendship requires honesty and trustworthiness, even in disagreements or changing circumstances. This honesty makes relationships real and not fake, as people trust each other, ensuring they are honest and trustworthy.

Maintaining integrity in a rapidly changing environment requires establishing accountability standards. This approach covers accountability for those involved by specifying consequences for unethical action and recognizing and rewarding integrity in decision-making. It is also critical to Keep up with industry trends, regulations, and changes that can help companies foresee and react to challenges.

Such a proactive approach also helps team members align integrity-based practices with the changing environment. For example, promoting a Whistleblowing culture creates a trusted mechanism for reporting unethical conduct. Confidentiality is a compelling apparatus to prevent potential abuse, rewarding upstanding integrity, and tackling potential issues before they arise, allowing everyone to speak up without fearing retaliation.

We can also promote a culture of continuous growth, which is essential in maintaining integrity, to encourage the community to continue educating everyone about ethics/integrity. That can be workshops, seminars, and discussions to keep integrity at the front of everyone's mind, internally and externally, as conditions change. Utilizing these strategies would enable individuals and organizations to preserve their integrity better despite quick change and extreme uncertainty.

Postmodern relationship integrity is a crucial aspect of communication and cooperation in a world of discord. It involves respecting differences and tolerance for diverse perspectives without sacrificing truthfulness, fostering listening and consensus. Integrity is maintained through mutual understanding in personal relationships, as human transactions are dynamic and adaptable to changing life conditions through mutual agreement. For example, romantic relationship integrity requires partner responsiveness to satisfy each other's needs, ensuring healthy and perpetual relationships.

¹³Elacio, Alexen A., F. G. Balazon, and Luisito L. Lacatan. "Digital transformation in managing employee retention using agile and C4. 5 algorithms." no 15217 (2020): 15217-15225.

¹⁴Brown, Brené. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. Gotham Books, 2012.

Abandoning the Old

The relationship between modern and postmodern identities is complex and ethically irresolvable. Postmodernism's approach to identity, which emphasizes fluidity and constructivism, contrasts sharply with the stability and coherence traditionally associated with integrity. Postmodernism blurs the objectivity of the self and compromises integrity assumptions, which usually assume essential unity. Scholars in postmodernism also underscore the issues of subjectivity and how a person is made up of many aspects, some of which can be in contradiction. This approach acknowledges that people's integrity is affected by various factors such as gender, ethnicity, and status.¹⁵

Postmodernism challenges the idea of an individual as a single identity, arguing that there is no solid way to present oneself. The self is constantly influenced by external forces and influxes, leading to dramatic shifts in professional personas due to personal and social values. This fragmentation of the unified identity narrative emphasizes the complexity of identity and the need for a detailed understanding. The first issue is authenticity, and constancy is an authenticity issue. If identity is so comprehensively dynamic, how is it possible to sustain a sound moral course? Cognitive integrity has standards for operating and making decisions, while ethical postmodernism calls for unstructured decision-making.¹⁶ For instance, an individual may have difficulty being ethical in his practice if he/ she changes his/her beliefs and values, often depending on the events he/she comes across or vices the society exposes to him/her, corporate or organizational body.

In addition, the problem of a postmodern identity becomes immoral; one's actions are only regarded as moral if those in the immediate vicinity approve of them. Cultural relativism threatens to establish ethical standards, which may result in inconsistency of ethical conduct.¹⁷ In organizational and private life, people might encounter situations in which performing a job or a role imposes moral tensions originating from the incompatibility between the changing self and the ethical standards of society.

Identity transformation can expose the dilemma of beliefs and obligations, showing the difficulty of navigating ethical crosscurrents. To resolve this imbalance, one must respect the postmodern structure of people's identities while highlighting the importance of ethical integrity in society. A loose ethical framework can be detrimental to resolving conflicting value systems. Adjusting to circumstances without giving up essential principles, such as truth and respectable conduct, is challenging but needed. Another significant caution regarding the adaptation of integrity in postmodernism is the process of reflectiveness, which implies the constant evaluation of actions regarding changes in identities and fundamental values. In this practice, people can overcome ethical dilemmas, a core problem of postmodern identity and personality, while being ethical. However, the lack of ethical standards to settle moral disputes remains an issue. Engaging in the dialogue between traditional and postmodern perspectives can deepen people's knowledge and allow them to accept each other's viewpoints despite the challenges of integration and adaptability.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has outlined the theoretical understanding of integrity, focusing on its pre- and postmodern definitions, the activities that disrupt its understanding, and its application in different settings. In discussing such aspects, this article has shown that integrity means adherence to strict moral standards. The article has touched on the ethical dilemmas that arise when one tries to balance conventional and contemporary morality. The initial exploration of the meaning of integrity underscored its foundational aspects rooted in traditional definitions. This traditional view stresses the significance of one's identity being rigid and consistent and the moral absolutes of right and wrong. This is also supported by contextualization in history and the Bible, where integrity is viewed as adhering to the highest ethical and personal integrity standards. This is further supported

¹⁵Hall, Stuart ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997.

¹⁶Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Routledge, 1972.

¹⁷Nussbaum, Martha C. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Harvard University Press, 1997.

by biblical stories like Job and Daniel, which depict the characteristics of Integrity and moral character in the face of hardships and tribulations.

However, postmodernism has some features that challenge the traditional viewpoint on integrity. This line of reasoning corresponds with postmodernism, which asserts that identity is not fixed, unified, and coherent but somewhat fragmented and constructed. This change also destabilizes the self and questions the existence of a single morality that people have. Regarding postmodern identities, since they are less stable, ethical questions are an issue of relativism, where less established morality and moral frameworks become relative to the context in which they are applied, thus leading to possible ethical issues and ambiguity.

Practical integrity applications in a postmodern context show how these challenges cannot be addressed and managed on relativistic grounds. Nevertheless, conflict resolution remained a constant challenge. Workplace integrity in a traditional setting would mean executing professional responsibilities with a high moral standard while ensuring equitable conflict resolution. This entails preserving values like honesty and accountability in a context where identities and contexts shift. Integrity remains essential to personal relationships, where continuity, reliability, and conformity to ethical standards are paramount.

Discussing the postmodern views on identity and focusing on the loss of the old self for the benefit of creating the new one might raise ethical issues. One of the problems with postmodernism is that it rejects the idea of a single, stable identity and opts for a multiplicity of subject positions, raising questions about ethical considerations. The pragmatic postmodernism's notion of instability and pluralism brings problematic aspects to the concept of self, which is the central paradox of postmodernism. The idea that breaking with traditional values leads to moral breakdown, thus, the need for an intermediary between the change of the self and the preservation of the subject's ethical code, is illusory. The inability to resolve moral conflict shows the inadequacy of the postmodern pluralistic system.

In conclusion, it is possible to identify both the potential and the conflict regarding integrity in response to the postmodern context. The concepts of integrity arising from the conventional theoretical frameworks based on consistency and ethical stability establish a crucial ethical framework for equitable conflict resolution. However, the postmodern voices can provide practical temporal perspectives on flexibility and plurality of views. Although grounded vision and values, ethical self-observations, and open communication enable people and societies to challenge and resolve effectively the complex issues of integrity in the modern world, its equitable applicability remains an issue. The combination of conventional and postmodern approaches may allow it to maintain the core elements of integrity and highlight its sufficiency in ever-changing and diverse contexts, emphasizing the need for conformity. Integrity means adherence to a universal ethical standard, inadequate in a relativistic postmodern context.

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