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Wade Williams, Journal Entry 2, *Moral Relativism*

I really enjoyed reading *A Defense of Cultural Relativism* written by Ruth Benedict. It is essentially an essay about cultural relativism, but for me it was truly thought provoking. One idea that got me thinking was the fact that most people never really step outside of their familiar culture to actually dive into another culture that is completely different from their own. And people assume that everything they grew up learning in their society is correct, and all of the moral lessons they have learned are superior to morals of other cultures. As I read Chapter 7 “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”, I was at first taken aback when the author talks about the Callatians, and how they eat the dead body of their father. I know that according to everything I was taught as I was raised, cannibalism is a very bad thing, and only taboo cultures do such a thing. But later in the chapter, the author states the Callatians reacted in disgust to the practice of burying or cremating dead loved ones. But I began to think about their perspective, and honestly, eating the body of a dead relative would be more respectable than spending thousands of dollars to put them in a casket and bury them in the ground to go to waste.

The author also explores the different culture of the Eskimos, and how they practice infanticide (the practice of killing newborn infants). At first, to me it sounded like a truly barbaric act, to kill healthy newborn babies, especially if they are girls. But the author explains the lifestyle of the Eskimos, and that males are needed because they contribute to the survival of the community. In addition, there is also a high mortality rate of infants due to the extreme conditions, and sometimes a lack of food. Therefore, killing newborn infants is still a tough choice for the parent Eskimos but it saves the infant from a short and painful life. Both of the assigned readings this week have really opened my mind, and made me ponder about the various cultures that exist out in the world. Some people that live in this society believe it is perfectly normal to wake up in the

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morning and drive a huge machine at speeds of a mile a minute to work, buying a cup of coffee made from coffee beans shipped thousands of miles. Other cultures find this lifestyle unreal and irresponsible, because almost every action in our daily lives contributes to degradation of the planet even though we rarely think about it. Reading through the Ethics book has made me consider new perspectives, and I really appreciate the challenge. After all, about five months ago I changed my perspective on eating meat produced on large scale farms, after realizing that there are many negative effects on your personal health, animal health, and health of the environment.