

Ethics_SS Class 14

6th July, 2024 at 1:00 PM

REVISION OF THE PREVIOUS CLASS (01:04 PM)

DIMENSIONS OF ETHICS (01:05 PM)

- **Descriptive Ethics:**
- What do people think is right?
- **Meta-Ethics:**
- What does RIGHT even Mean?
- **Normative Ethics:**
- What is the RIGHT thing to do?
- **Applied Ethics?:**
- Application of moral knowledge in real-life situations.

DESCRIPTIVE ETHICS (01:12 PM)

- It is an empirical investigation of actions that are rewarded or punished by the society.
- It is a value-free approach to ethics as it does not make any judgments about the morality of the practices and beliefs.
- It just tries to explain what is considered ethical in different societies and cultures.
- For example, Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of **Moral development**.
- Lawrence Kohlberg was an American Psychologist who believed that like Cognitive development, moral development also takes place in stages.
- He used a storytelling technique that involved ethical dilemmas and based on how individuals choose to reason and respond will determine the stage of moral development.

Heinz Dilemma:

- It was one of the best-known dilemmas which discussed the idea of obeying the law versus saving a life.
- Heinz's wife was terminally ill, however, a chemist discovered a drug that could be used to save his wife.
- The chemist was charging 10 times the cost and when after repeated requests, he did not relent then one evening out of separation, Heinz broke into and stole the drug.
- **Kohlberg asked various questions based on the dilemma and with respect to the response, he identified three stages of moral development**

Pre-Conventional (Below 9 years)	Stage (I)	Right and Wrong are determined by what an individual is punished for
	Stage (II)	Right and Wrong are determined by Self- Interest, For example, Rewards
Conventional (9<19 years)	Stage (III)	Interpersonal relationship Conformity ==> Morality, for example, good boy and good girl image
	Stage (IV)	Social Order, for example, laws need to be obeyed
Post-Conventional (>19 years)	Stage (V)	Social Contract; laws are made by agreements, and can be changed for the greater good.
	Stage (VI)	Moral Guidelines (Based on the idea of justice, Fairness, Humanity, Equality, etc.)

Stage I:

- The right and wrong are determined by what individuals get punished for.
- For example, if a child gets scolded for stealing, they know stealing is wrong.

Stage II:

- Right and wrong are determined by what an individual is rewarded for.
- For example, Morality is determined by the motivation for self-interest.
- (Child does chores in exchange for a reward such as extra play time).

Stage III:

- A child adopts a **conformist attitude** to morality.
- Individuals act to gain approval from others.
- For example, a student volunteers at a community service project to gain praise from teachers and peers.

Stage IV:

- Doing good is the duty of the society.
- Obeying laws, respecting authority, and performing one's duties to maintain social order.
- For example, a person stops at a red light even when no one is around because following traffic rules is important to maintain order and safety on the routes.

Stage V:

- Right and wrong is determined by what is required to be done to promote the greatest good that is you believe that laws should be respected but when they become destructive or restrictive, they can be overridden.
- For example, protesting against unjust laws because it violates human rights.

Stage VI:

- People at this stage have their own moral guidelines which may or may not fit the public opinion or society laws.
- These principles apply to everyone and are based on justice, equality, humanity, etc.
- People are ready to defend these principles even if they have to go against rest of the society.
- For example, Socio-religious reformers and whistle-blowers.

META-ETHICS (01:57 PM)

- It deals with "What does RIGHT even mean?".
- It is defined as a sub-discipline of ethics that involves the evaluation of ethics.
- For example, What do you mean by morality? why stealing is immoral? Is stealing always immoral?

Moral Absolutism:

- It is defined as a philosophy according to which there exists an absolute definition of moral conduct which does not change with circumstances or context.
- For example, Nishkama Karma, religious teachings, and Deontology.

Moral Relativism:

- Nothing is right or wrong for all time to come.
- The standards of moral behaviour depend upon society, culture, time period, etc.
- For example, Matri-Local, Patri-local Marriage.

Moral Objectivism:

- According to this philosophy, some acts are objectively right or wrong independent of what an individual thinks.
- For example, Fundamental Duties enshrined in the Constitution.

Moral Subjectivism:

- It is a philosophy according to which right or wrong is not determined by rules, regulations, etc but by the perception of the subject.
- For example, According to X, development projects should be carried out as they will lead to economic growth whereas According to Y, these projects are leading to displacement of tribals and hence, not desirable.

Moral Nihilism:

- It is a meta-ethical view that believes nothing is right or wrong inherently in ethics.
- According to them, ethical claims are false because they can change and can be given meaning by the individuals.
- There is no inherent morality in any action.
- For example, Medical Termination of Pregnancy is prohibited in some countries on ethical grounds, similarly, capital punishment is prohibited in many countries on ethical grounds.
- It is different from moral relativism which allows for actions to be right or wrong in relation to a particular context whereas Nihilism denies the existence of any action to be right or wrong inherently.
- For example, according to Nihilists, the statement such as "Murder is wrong or helping others is good" lack inherent truth or validity beyond individual or society's opinion.
- Nihilism and subjectivism are related concepts but they are not the same as subjectivism acknowledges the existence of moral judgements whereas Nihilism considers them meaningless as there is no basis for determining right or wrong.

NORMATIVE ETHICS (02:29 PM)

- What is the RIGHT thing to do?
- Different basis for determining it:
- Action Based
- Virtue Based
- Justice Based
- Rights Based.

Action based:

- Moral worth of an action is determined by:
- Means;
- Ends.

Means:

- Moral worth of an action is determined by the "act" itself which is no wrong way of doing the right thing.
- Rightness is determined by the process and not the outcome.
- For example, Nishkama Karma.
- Also known as **Deontology/Duty-based ethics**.
- Criticised for being rigid.

Ends:

- The moral worth of the action is determined by the consequences of actions that is "Ends justify the Means".
- Rightness is determined by the outcome, For example, Robinhood.
- Also known as **Teleology/Consequential Ethics**.
- Criticised because it is difficult to predict the consequences of action accurately.
- The Trolley Dilemma (explained through a diagram) was proposed by **Phillipa Foot**.
- In the above dilemmas, it exemplify the debate between Deontology and Teleology.
- However, in the first and the third dilemma, the chances of following Deontology are high whereas in the second dilemma one may resort to teleology.

Threshold Deontology:

- Let us consider two situations, on one hand, there is an example where people are stranded on a boat killed an innocent teenager to survive whereas on the other hand, there is a bomb planted by a terrorist in a populated area and it is believed that by torturing information can be extracted and thousands of innocent lives can be saved.
- According to deontology, both actions are wrong, however, threshold deontology states that a wrong act can be morally justified if the consequences surpass a certain threshold of seriousness.

Deontology:

- Immanuel Kant

Teleology:

- Self:
- Psychological Egoism.
- Ethical Egoism.
- Others:
- Utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham);
- Revisited Utilitarianism (JS Mill)
- Common Good (Amartya Sen)

TELEOLOGY (03:18 PM)

- Action is determined by the consequences.

Egoism:

- Refers to situations when behavior is solely motivated by the desire to benefit self.

- **Psychological Egoism:**

- Humans are always motivated by self-interest.

- Descriptive Approach.

- Thomas Hobbes.

- **Ethical Egoism:**

- Humans should be motivated by self-interest.

- Prescriptive Approach.

- Ayn Rand.

Positives of ethical egoism:

- 1. It avoids any possible conflict because according to this approach, moral decision-making should be guided by self-interest.
- 2. It will make moral behavior rational because it is rational to pursue one's interest.
- 3. It will encourage self-awareness.
- 4. If an individual knows himself and what he wants, it is easier to remain productive in society.
- In fact, ethical egoism will make us work towards our goals and indulge in self-care routines.

Negatives of ethical egoism:

- There is a counterargument that this approach will create a self-centered society and will lead to a loss of empathy.

Ayn Rand's Perspective:

- According to her, the individual should exist for their own sake that is sacrificing yourself for others or vice-versa is not required.
- According to her, Egoism is a virtue of selfishness.
- However, her perspective might dilute the cohesiveness in society.

THE TOPIC TO BE DISCUSSED IN THE NEXT CLASS- Continuation of the topic of Teleology