

Engineering Ethics

(Hum 4441)

Lecture 2

Ethical theories that are a matter of concern

- ❑ An engineer may phase decisional dilemmas with respect to the different tasks
 - Starting from the phase of conceptualization of the design.
 - Then, from the preliminary analysis to final analysis,
 - Next, working on that design to find out suppliers
 - Then, finding out the ways of doing things again
 - Then, in the final implementation stage
 - and after that going for the maintenance phase.
- ❑ So, at each and every phase, there could be ethical decisional issues dilemmas for the engineers:
 - at each of the stages, **there are different stakeholders** who are connected and there could be a conflict of interest between these stakeholders.
 - it may be the case that **engineers cannot satisfy the interest of all the stakeholders** at a time and they need to **make a decision, which is most ethical in a most ethical way and having a most ethical outcome.**
 - **Engineers** always have to remember that **their primary responsibility is to take care of the safety concern, the welfare and the health** of the public.

Word Ethics

- ❑ **Ethics:** Ancient Greek word: **ethikos** (ἠθικός): relating to one's character
- ❑ **ethikos:** *êthos* (ἦθος): “character, moral nature”
- ❑ Ethics is **not concerned with describing how things are**, it's **concerned with looking into how things ought to be**.
- ❑ In ancient Greek, when **Socrates** and other philosophers talked about ethics, then they **talked about virtues, the positive qualities in one's character and negative qualities in one's character**.

What is/are Ethics?

- ❑ **Ethics** is a branch of philosophy that deals with it right (good) and wrong (bad) conduct.
- ❑ A system of moral principles and moral values that help us specify and distinguish between right and wrong.
- ❑ A set of moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual (Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy)
- ❑ **Morals:** Rules of behavior, which specify right and wrong.

Ethics vs Morality

- ❑ **Ethics** is often used in connection with the activities of organisations and with professional codes of conduct:
 - for instance, medical and business ethics, which are often formalized in terms of exhaustive sets of rules or guidelines stating how employees are expected to behave in their workplaces such as in respect of a duty of care or confidentiality that health-care workers owe to their patients;
- ❑ **Morality**, on the other hand, is more often used in connection with the ways in which individuals conduct their personal, private lives, often in relation to personal financial probity, lawful conduct and acceptable standards of interpersonal behaviors (including truthfulness, honesty etc.).

Major areas of Ethics

- Meta-Ethics
- Normative Ethics
- Applied Ethics

Meta-Ethics

- ❑ The **theoretical meaning** and reference of moral propositions.
 - for instance, 'what is goodness?'
- ❑ A **meta-ethical question is abstract** and it relates to a wide range of more specific practical questions.
 - questions of **how ethical knowledge is obtained** (for instance, '**how can I distinguish what is good from what is bad?**'), rather **than** on the more **applied question of 'what should I do in a particular situation?'**
- ❑ Meta-ethics is therefore **concerned with the nature of ethical properties, statements, attitudes and judgments**. Meta-ethics examines such themes as what moral questions mean, and on what basis people can know what is 'true' or 'false'.

Meta-Ethical questions

- What does it mean to say something is "ethically good"?
- How, if at all, do we know what is right and wrong?
- How do moral attitudes motivate action?
- Are there objective or absolute values?
- What is the source of our values?
- Is it possible to justify our ethical judgments?
- Can there be a **universal ethics**, or can there be only culture-dependent or culture-specific ethical judgments or norms that are relative to a given culture?

Normative Ethics

- ❑ It is the study of ethical actions.
- ❑ Practical means of determining a moral course of action how one ought to act in a particular situation.
- ❑ It examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions i.e. and on how people can decide what the 'correct' moral actions to take are.
- ❑ Consequentialism, Deontology, Virtue ethics etc.

Consequence/ result



Duty



Character/good qualities



Applied Ethics

- ❑ It is concerned with **how people can achieve moral outcomes** in specific situations.
- ❑ What a person/organization (an entity) is **obligated (or permitted) to do in a specific situation** or a particular domain of action.
- ❑ It attempts to **apply ethical theory to real-life situations**.
- ❑ It is concerned with the **philosophical examination** of particular - and often complex - **issues that involve moral judgments**.
- ❑ Areas such as bioethics, environmental ethics, development ethics and business/corporate ethics may be regarded as areas of applied ethics.

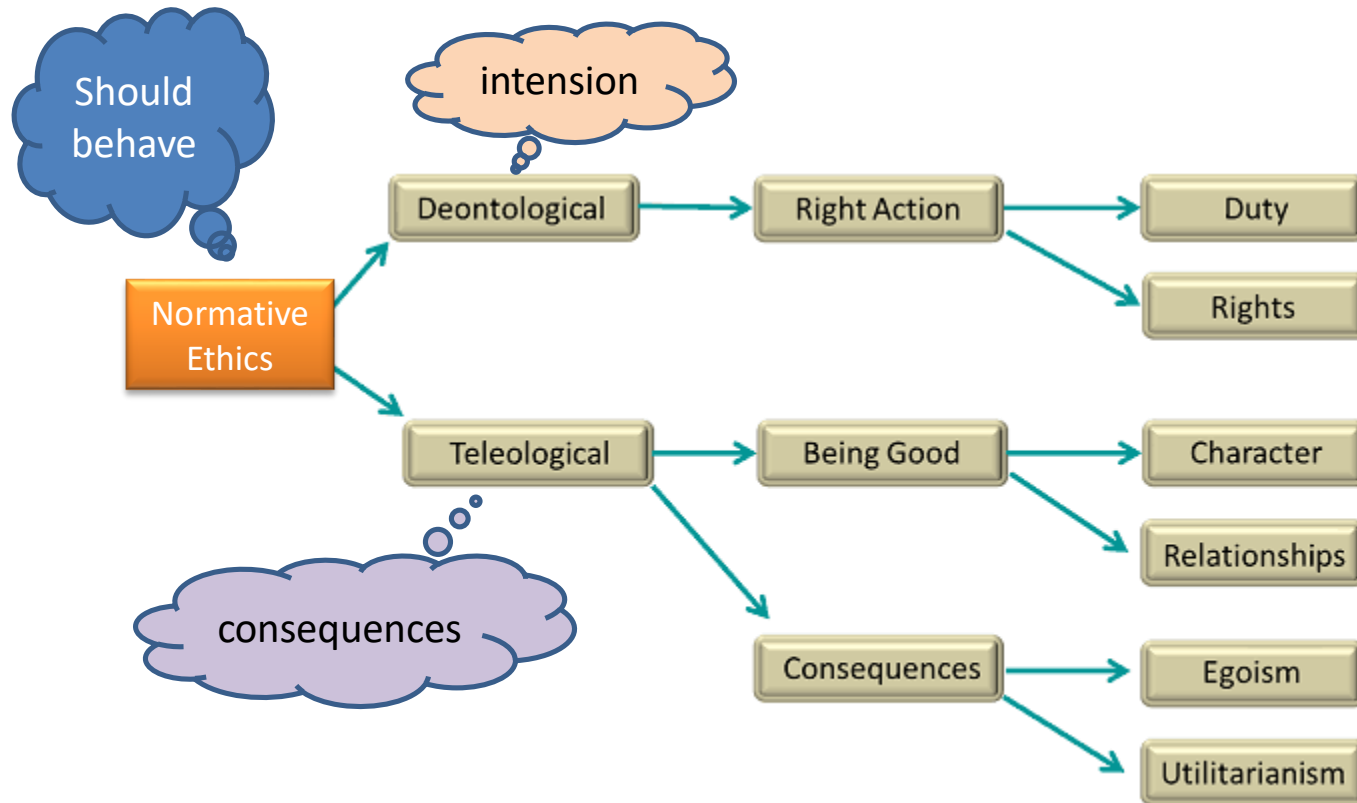
Major areas of Ethics

- ❑ **Meta ethics** investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. They focus on issues of universal truths, the role of reason in a judgment.
- ❑ **Normative ethics** takes on a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behavior on others.
- ❑ **Applied ethics** involves examining specific controversial issues, such as infanticide, animal rights, or nuclear war. It consists in the attempt to answer difficult moral questions actual people face in their lives. Thus, **applied ethics** is just the application of normative ethics to particular issues of practical concern

Major areas of Ethics

- **Normative ethics** addresses questions such as
 - "Which things are (morally or ethically) good and bad?"
 - "What should we do?,"
 - thus **endorsing some ethical evaluations** and **rejecting others**
- **Meta-ethics** addresses questions such as:
 - "What is (moral or ethical) goodness?"
 - "What does it mean to say that something is good?"
 - "What are the characteristics or qualities of an acceptable or defensible ethical theory?"
 - "What is justice?"
 - "How do we know or recognize that something is or is not ethically good?"
 - thus to **understand the nature of ethical properties** and evaluations as such, and not just the content of particular norms or evaluations.

Normative Ethics



Deontological

- ❑ The word **deontological** is derived from the Greek word *deon*, meaning 'duty'.
- ❑ It is concerned with **right action** - in other words, with **doing the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do**.
- ❑ Deontological theories **focus on whether ethical decisions are right or wrong, regardless of the consequences** of those ethical decisions.
- ❑ Deontology states that the **ethical value of an action is in intention** of the agent.
- ❑ Rules and moral duty are central.

Teleological

- ❑ The word **teleological** is derived from two Greek words: *telos*, which means 'purpose' or 'goal'; and *logos*, which refers to 'science' or 'study'.
- ❑ It is concerned with **being good** - in other words, with being a good person with good intentions.
- ❑ In contrast to deontological ethics, the teleological ethical traditions concentrate on the purpose of or the consequences of human actions.
- ❑ The focus of teleological ethical theories is on what the goal of a given decision is.