

Ethics in Theory and Practice

-- Narendra Kumar

Objectives

- At the end of the module we will know:
 1. Why is ethics so important in human society?
 2. What are the theories for making value/ ethical judgements?
 3. How to apply these theories of ethics?
 4. How to be sensitive about the ethical value/s of an action?

Human Values

- Values that are essential for **human existence**
- Values satisfy a human need or desire
- Values: 1. Means of Goodness
2. Good in themselves

Einstein on Human Values

Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he sometimes thinks he feels it. But from the point of view of daily life, without going deeper, we exist for our fellow-men--in the first place **for those on whose smiles and welfare all our happiness depends**, and next for all **those unknown to us personally with whose destinies we are bound up by the tie of sympathy**. A hundred times every day I remind myself that **my inner and outer life depend on the labours of other men, living and dead**, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.

(Guiding human values for E: **Truth; Goodness and Beauty**)

Dalai Lama on Human Values

Secular Ethics and Human Values:

Values that are essential for human existence:

- 1. Compassion**
- 2. Forgiveness**
- 3. Tolerance**
- 4. Contentment**
- 5. Self-discipline**

Ethics – What????

- The field of ethics (or moral philosophy) involves **systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts** of right and wrong behavior.
- The study of ethics helps us make value judgment about deeds of human beings living in a society...
- Ethical judgements have their roots in the **cultural context**

Ethics – Why and For Whom????

- Aks (The Reflection)
- Aks (The Reflection_2)

Question:

Which is ethical out of these two acts
and why???

Ethics – What????

The term is derived from the Greek word *ethos* which can mean **custom**, **habit**, **character** or **disposition**.

Why... For whom...

- Ethics helps the human society survive and flourish
- For a normal human being living in a society
- **Free will and Devine will (Destiny)**

Approaches to Ethics...

- **Meta-ethics** deals with the nature of moral judgement. It looks at the origins and meaning of ethical principles.
- **Normative ethics** is concerned with the content of moral judgements and the criteria for what is right or wrong.
- **Applied ethics** looks at the application of ethical principals to arrive at ethical judgments

Means and Ends...

- Consequentialism
- Duty Ethics or Deontological Ethics
- Virtue Ethics

Hedonism...

- Carvaka and Epicurus
- Hedonism; Materialism; Epicurianism
- Eat, Drink and Be Merry

Modern Hedonism...

- Michel Onfray
- Ethical Hedonism
- He defines hedonism "as an introspective attitude to life based on taking pleasure yourself and pleasuring others, without harming yourself or anyone else."

Where does ethics come from...

- God and religion
- Human conscience and intuition
- A rational moral cost-benefit analysis of actions and their effects
- The example of good human beings
- A desire for the best in each unique situation
- Political power

Utilitarianism...

- “Of all the things a person might do at any given moment, the morally right action is the one with the best overall consequences.”
- Bentham; Stuart Mill; Sedgwick
- Maximization of utility
- Maximum good for maximum people
- Maximum happiness for maximum people

Act Utilitarianism/ Act Consequentialism...

- A particular action is morally good only if it produces more overall good than any alternative action.

Act Utilitarianism/ Act Consequentialism...

- Problems:
- Each act requires prior assessment and research leading to delayed response
- All judgments are not alike
- Intended and real consequences
- Possibility of manipulation
- Gives too much autonomy to individuals

Rule Utilitarianism/ Rule Consequentialism...

- Whether acts are good or bad depends on moral rules
- Moral rules are chosen solely on the basis of their consequences
- An action is morally right if and only if it does not violate the set of rules of behaviour whose general acceptance in the community would have the best consequences--that is, at least as good as any rival set of rules or no rules at all.

Rule Utilitarianism/ Rule Consequentialism...

- Problem:
- Less flexible
- Remedy: Apply basic rules, together with a set of variations that cover a wide range of situations. These variations are themselves derived in the same way as the general rules

Consequentialism...Criticism

- Intended utility and actually resultant utility
- Future consequences are difficult to predict
- Measuring and comparing the 'goodness' of consequences is very difficult
- It is easy to bias in favour of particular groups
- It ignores things we regard as ethically relevant
- It doesn't take account of the 'fairness' of the result
- It may go against the idea of democracy
- It is may go against the idea of Human Rights
- Utility means a different thing for different people

Divide the lottery:

- USD 10,000.00
- Share it with a stranger

Deontological/ Duty Ethics (Immanuel Kant)

- Human beings are rational
- They have free will
- Choice, wish and will
- Pure reason/ Practical reason/ Pure practical reason
- End right/ good

Categorical Imperatives:

➤ Moral Maxim 1.

Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction.

Categorical Imperatives:

➤ Moral Maxim 2.

Act in such a way that you treat **humanity**, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a **means** to an end, but always at the same time as an **end**.

Categorical Imperatives:

➤ Moral Maxim 3.

Therefore, every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends.

Philosophy of Karma: Bhagavad Gita

**Karmanyē Vadhikaraste,
Ma Phaleshou Kadachana.**

**Ma Karma Phala Hetur
Bhurmatey Sangostva Akarmani.**

Philosophy of Karma: Bhagavad Gita

**CHATUR VARNYAM MAYAA SRISHTAM
GUNA KARMA VIBHAGASHAHA
TASYA KARTARAM API MAAM
VIDDHI AKARTARAM AVYAYAM**

Bhagavad Gita and Kant

- Human beings are rational
- They have free will
- **Choice**, **wish** and **will**
- Pure reason/ Practical reason/ Pure practical reason
- End right/ good
- Kant: free will, moral problem and the law of duty
- Gita: **Karma and free will**

Bhagavad Gita and Kant

What is the battlefield of Kurukshetra if it is not the battlefield of life?

Who is Arjuna if he is not an ordinary mortal endowed with both reason and sense?

Who are the Kauravas and others standing in array before Arjuna if they are not the lower passions and temptations?

Who is Krishna if he is not the voice of God echoing in every man?

Bhagavad Gita and Kant

Therefore, arise, thou son of Kunti! Brace
Thine arm for conflict, nerve thy heart to meet
As things alike to thee – pleasure or pain,
Profit or ruin, victory or defeat;
So minded, gird thee to the fight; for so
Thou shalt not sin.

Thank You