**Functional Definition of ethics**

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that considers "right and wrong" in the context of human action as a means toward providing guidance for making decisions that will lead to "right" action.

To expound on this definition:

Ethics is defined as a branch of **philosophy**, which is explained in detail in the previous post. The only additional detail I would like to add at this time is that philosophy deals in abstractions, seeking to discuss the general nature of things, with an eye toward applying general principles to specific situations that may arise.

The consideration of **"right and wrong"** also distinguishes ethics from the other branches of philosophy (metaphysics and epistemology). In addition to considering whether the outcome of an action is "right," the notion of "right" itself is a topic to be considered.

The context of **human action** is also worth including. While it would seem self-evident, I have encountered instances where an attempt is made to apply the concept of ethics to "things" rather than actions, and to actions over which human beings had neither influence nor control. The latter, however, may be subject to further consideration.

The function of ethics is defined as providing **guidance**, with the implication that it is to be applied to the future. Ethics can, and often does, evaluate the actions of the past - and while there may be some value in doing so (to judge and punish wrongdoers), its principle value is as a guide for actions to be taken in the future.

The specification of **decision-making** is likewise an area that may require further consideration. Ultimately, we refer to actions as being ethical or unethical, but every action is preceded by a decision and it is only here that ethics can have a meaningful impact.

And finally, the objective of ethics is defined as **leading to "right" action**. While it is possible that an individual might assess ethics with the intention of pursuing "wrong" or abandoning "right," ethics is most often employed to define the correct or desirable course of action, and negative consequences are a failure to consider ethics rather than the deliberate choice to define and follow a "wrong" course of action.