# ETHICS

"Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane."

**Ethicist Principal of the American school says this every year to the school teachers**

**Socrates is the The Father of Ethics**
**Philosophical ethics** investigates what is the best way for humans to live, and what kinds of actions are right or wrong circumstances.

**The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy** states that the word ethics is "commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' ... and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual.

**Dino Lobaton states** that "standard definitions of ethics have typically included such phrases as 'the science of the ideal human character' or 'the science of moral duty' ".

**Richard William Paul and Linda Elder** define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behaviour helps or harms sentient creatures".

# Ethics

**It is moral philosophy, a branch of philosophy that ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues.**

- The term comes from the Greek word ethikos from ethos, which means "custom, habit"

- The term 'Ethics' is often understood as the sense of what is right and wrong

- Employees personal feelings differ from those of our employers

- The tasks an employee is asked to do at work may not be illegal, but they can impose a conflict with our perception of right

- The majority of professionals solve this by choosing to separate their professional lives from their personal lives

- Ethics is an undertaking not just to ask difficult questions but have the courage to do so

# Branches of Ethics

- Meta-Ethics: (Ethics about Ethics)
- Prescriptive Ethics: (also known as Normative Ethics) – which is again divided into
  - Deontological Ethics
  - Teleological Ethics
  - Virtue Ethics
- Descriptive Ethics: (also known as Comparative Ethics)

# 1. Meta-Ethics

- Meta-ethics can be defined as a branch of ethics that is concerned with the study of the nature of ethics. It analyzes the meaning when we use words like good, bad, right, and wrong.

- Meta-Ethics is more about philosophy in nature as it deals with the nature of ethics and morality.

- Meta-ethics investigates where our moral and ethical principles come from and what is the meaning behind using them.

- Deals with questions like What is meant by being right? OR what is meant by being wrong?

- Deals with the definition of right and wrong.

- Meta means about the thing itself.

- So Meta-Ethics is Ethics about Ethics.

- Meta-Ethics is more concerned with the terms of morality in the language we use.

- How do we define 'good' or 'bad'?

For Example: "What is meant by a wrong action?" Another example is, when we say, 'abortion is good', or 'abortion is bad'?

## 2. Prescriptive Ethics (Normative Ethics)

- Prescriptive Ethics, also known as, Normative ethics can be defined as the study of ethical action, typically based on what is morally right and wrong.

- Normative ethics is more practical as it applies to basic human behavior and actions.

- There are mainly three theories that come under normative ethics. Deontological, Teleological (Consequential), Virtue.

  - Deontological Ethics (Focus on action/duty)

    -Deals with questions like "is that action right (ethical)? OR was that act wrong?

  - Teleological Ethics (Focus on the outcome/end)

    - Checks if the action/outcome of action fits into the definition of right or wrong

    For Example; is it wrong to kill a person to save many lives?

  - Virtue Ethics: The concept of a virtue is the concept of something that makes its possessor good: a virtuous person is a morally good, excellent or admirable

    For example : A person giving charity

- Prescriptive Ethics involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong action (behavior).

- It also includes arriving at moral standards that guide to act right or wrong.

-  It is an ideal litmus test of identify behavior.

# 3. Descriptive Ethics (Comparative Ethics)

- **Descriptive ethics can be defined as describing and explaining people's moral attitudes and the moral norms and practices of societies.**
- It deals with what is believed to be good, right, or virtuous and moral practices societies do have.
- Descriptive ethics are also known as comparative ethics and it is empirically based, and aim to discover and describe the moral beliefs of a specific culture.
- Deals with people's beliefs about morality.
- Deals with what society thinks is good or bad.
- It is an empirical investigation of the moral beliefs of various groups.
- **For Example;** How many of you think that it is wrong to kill a person? Another example is when we say "Everyone has a moral right to a good education".
- It is an approach to describe what people think about morality or when want to describe how people actually behave according to their morals.

# 4. Applied Ethics

- Applied ethics can be defined as a branch of moral philosophy that attempts to apply ethical principles and moral theories to real-life moral issues.

- The most practical branch of ethics.

- Deals with ethical questions specific to practical fields.

- Includes bioethics, legal ethics, business ethics, medical ethics, etc.

For Example: Is it ethical to allow euthanasia? Other examples are Capital punishment, Animal Rights, and War between two countries.

- Applied ethics refers to the discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply ethical theory to real-life situations.

For example: abortion is a major issue and it is an applied ethical topic since it consists of a specific type of controversial behavior.

# Personal Ethics

- Personal Ethics is generally considered as the basic principles and values that govern interactions among individuals

- It can also be used to describe a particular person's own, idiosyncratic principles or habits

- Sound personal ethics are typically those that positively impact the experience of others when used to govern an individual's social or business related behaviour, and at the very least, such ethics should not have a negative impact on others.

- Ethics is what a person identifies with in respect to people and situations that they deal with in everyday life.

- Personal ethics is a category of philosophy that determines what an individual believes about morality and right and wrong

# Where has Personal Ethics Come From?

1.Some philosophers use man's sense of morality to support the existence of God.

- These philosophers typically agree that a divine power instilled personal morality in humankind, creating a basic universal system of right and wrong.

2.Other philosophers argue that ethics are not inherent at all and that children learn right and wrong solely from social conditioning. This could be the cause of the differing personal ethics found throughout the world.

- These philosophers typically suggest that a person's ethics are learned from families, friends and teachers. Some ethics might also be adapted from individual experiences.

- The purpose of personal ethics is often debated.

- Religion inspires a large portion of ethics.

- Many devoted followers are willing to adhere to a specific morality system on faith alone.

- These personal ethics can breed lofty goals.

- Some people shape their actions and priorities around ending world hunger, slowing global warming or encouraging world peace.

**Another possible motivation for personal ethics is to serve the individual**.

- Humanitarian efforts can also be more subtle, such as random acts of kindness for a neighbour or volunteering as a tutor.

**Sometimes different motivations can blend**

- A religious person might make personal ethical choices that simultaneously please her/him god while also helping the community.

- Philosophers might argue that a child will learn to share, tell the truth and work hard because he sees that these actions benefit him.

  **For example**,

a. When a child chooses to break the rules of a game, he is   creating conflict and building a barrier between himself and his peers.

b. A child who plays by the rules enjoys friendship and intimacy with his peers, ultimately benefiting himself.

**Personal Ethics are laid down as the codes of non-violence, tolerance, atonement, continence, devotion, philosophy, diet, hygiene, ecology, social and professional ethics, finance, employment and so on.**

**Some of the moral practices are cited as:**

• Never gamble

• Never steal; not even for religious work

• Never commit a breach of trust

• Never falsely blame anyone, even for personal gain

• Never publicise, anywhere, the secrets of others

• Never praise oneself

• Never enter or exit stealthily

• Never lodge at a place without the owner's permission

• Only spend in accordance with one's income

• Spending more than one's income will result in great misery

• Serve your mother, father, guru and ill people for life according to your means

# Professional Ethics

**Professional ethics encompass the personal, organizational and corporate standards of behaviour expected of professionals**

- Professionals, are those working in acknowledged professions, exercise specialist knowledge and skill.

- **Professional Ethics:** How the use of this knowledge should be governed when providing a service to the public can be considered a moral issue

  Professionals can make judgments, applying their skills and reaching informed decisions in situations that the general public cannot, because they have not received the relevant training.

- Professional ethics the ethical norms, values, and principles that guide a profession and the ethics of decisions made within the profession.

- PE are Professionally accepted standards of personal and business behaviour, values and guiding principles.

# 5 most sought-after workplace ethics and behaviour

- **Integrity:** One of the most important workplace ethics is integrity
- **Honesty:** Being an honest individual means you do not deceive others by giving out misleading information
- **Discipline:** Being disciplined at home and work place
- **Fair and respect:** Giving respect and being fair to all is an important virtue
- **Responsible and accountable:** Person with ethics is responsible and accountable

**Codes of professional ethics are often established by professional organizations to help guide members in performing their job functions according to sound and consistent ethical principles.**

- One should always take due care of one's servants, (employees and labourers), according to one's means, regarding their food and clothing

- Labourers should be given wages as agreed upon, but not less.

- Do not enter business or social relationships within the organisation

- Every person should be addressed with respect to his status and the prevailing circumstances, and should not be addressed in any other way

- Teach the knowledge one has to others

- Codes of behaviour, social dealings and penance – these three should be practiced as per one's place, time, age, wealth, caste and ability.

# Difference between Professional and Personal Ethics

## Personal Ethics

- Personal ethics is probably more general, and is simply "practicing becoming an excellent human being" with respect to people and situations in everyday life
(our family, our friends, our community)

- Personal ethics can influence all different areas of life such as family, finances, religion or relationship.

- Here the individual has the liberty and the freedom to choose his/her own set of rules if his conscience conflict with that of the surroundings.

- Personal ethics may change depending on situations

## Professional Ethics

- Professional ethics is probably more specific, and is "practicing becoming an excellent human being" with respect people and situations in work life
(co-workers, customers, suppliers, the company)

- Professional ethics play a unique role in that a person is held to a certain standard when in the workplace and must abide by a specific set of ethics that is required by all employees of the company.

- Professional ethics defines adherence to rules and regulation. Here the individual is expected to follow religiously, the code of ethics framed by the organization.

- It can be heavily influenced by the culture of the organization but it cannot change as frequently as the personal ethics

There may be at times where our personal ethics can conflict with our professional one, for instance, when a Professor enforces **Not Clear** result to a student as per law and the student explaining the cause for not being able to write in the test because of accidental death of father.

In such case, even if he is personally against this decision, he abides by the professional ethics to do so.

- So by setting out expected behaviour in the form of professional ethics, professionals try to uphold a good reputation.

- On the other hand, professionals are also expected to be honest and respect the code of ethics by not getting involved in any conflict of interest.

**A conflict of situation may occur if an individual tries to achieve personal goal while at profession which ultimately leads to corruption**

Though differences found both in Professional and Personal Ethics, it is revealed that the person strong and firm in Personal ethics are more likely to follow Professional Ethics, leaving all conflict aside.

Many scholars have shared their views as to family, neighbours, schools; surroundings, etc are more likely to make the person come across Personal Ethics.

But it majorly is concerned about one's own thinking of behaviour and attitude.

Similarly, Professional Ethics too do not match to every Profession.

Much of Personal Ethics are useful to identify and strengthen Professional Ethics.

From the various theories and models of Ethical building and resolving ethical conflict at the workplace, it can be said that Ethics is something a belief and moral values and cannot be forcefully implemented.

# Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865): Letter to Principal

Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865) wrote a letter to the Principal of the school of his son addressing saying,

*"He will have to learn, I know, that all men are not just, all men are not true. Teach him that for every enemy, there is a friend. Teach him, if you can, that a dollar earned is of far more value than five found...In school, teach him it is far more honourable to fail than to cheat... Teach him to have faith I his own ideas, even if everyone tells him they are wrong...Teach him to be gentle with gentle people and tough with the tough...This is a big order; but see what you can do..." As said by the philosopher, "An ounce of practice is more than tones of theories." Ethics, either Personal or Professional is to put into practice. This can only lead us to true peace and quality life. Or else as American President Lindon Jhonson (1965) says, "The guns, the bombs, the rockets and warships are the symbols of humanity's failures to find the way to true peace."*