**PHI 104 Introduction to Ethics**

**Section 7**

**Faculty: GAK**

**Lecture Handouts**

**Development of Ethics**

* We all human beings do have a sense of personality even in our early childhood age. This is an inborn human nature that all children have some decisions about what they like or dislike and what they think to be good or bad, etc.
* This inborn pattern of behavior regarding what is good or right or desirable, etc. are open for judgment.
* Such judgments lead to the study of morality or ethical standards of goodness and rightness of behavior.
* Such moral or ethical standards are related to life from childhood age and as such it is universal and important for all human beings.
* In the course of the development of human civilization, the concepts of morality and ethics developed in the institutional form.
* In the ancient period, these concepts developed in India, China and Greece.
* In India and China, these concepts developed from religious faiths and rituals. In Greece these concepts developed as pure philosophical thoughts on the basis of rational thinking without any influence of faith.
* With the gradual development of civilization, the field of ethics expanded. Towards the end of the 20th century this expansion led to the development of applied ethics and practical ethics.
* At present ethics is practiced in all life-related fields of study. An American thinker has written that an ethics boom (i.e. like an explosion) has occurred in USA. (Davis, M., *Ethics and the University*, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 3-21.)
* At present ethics has also been included in the primary school curriculum in USA and in Canada. In Bangladesh ethics has also been included in the curriculum of secondary school level.
* With this sketchy historical focus on ethics, now an institutional and academic discussion on ethics can move on.

**Ethics - Definition and Nature**

* One good definition of ethics is that ethics is the normative science of the conduct of human beings living in societies – a science which judges the conduct of human beings to be right or wrong, good or bad, or in some similar way.
* Normative science is of the opposite type of natural science. In natural sciences, laws of nature are discovered or theories of natural functions are constructed. These laws and theories are about the realities of the natural world.
* Normative science does not discover laws or create theories regarding how the reality of human life and society exist. Rather it makes laws about how human beings and society should function.
* Normative science develop some norms (i.e. customs of behavior) rules and standards of behavior.
* In natural science laws and theories are in accordance of the reality of nature; in normative science the norms, rules and standards are made in accordance with how human beings and society desire.
* On the basis of norms, rules and standards, ethics judges which human actions are right or good and which actions are wrong or bad.
* Ethics also deals with the right or wrong and good or bad of human conduct. Conduct is the collective name for voluntary actions or the behavioral pattern of individuals.
* An action is voluntary when it is done with freedom of choice with some motive or intention. Abnormal actions of mad man or the the prisoners are not voluntary actions. And physical human actions like blood circulation, heart beat and similar other actions are not voluntary action.
* Ethics as a normative science also is concerned with the validity and truth of the norms, rules and standards of behavior.
* One problem in ethics is that the concepts of rightness or goodness may differ from person to person, and may vary from society to society and from time to time.
* To overcome such problem, attempts are taken in ethics to determine an objective meaning of rightness or goodness so that people in general can follow them.
* Objective and general ideas however are not absolute and sometimes are contextual. In this way ethical theories develop from time to time.
* Accordingly, following good and right norms in our voluntary actions, we can attain morality and can claim to be moral. Ethics, as a branch of knowledge, deals with the systematic study of the moral issues of voluntary actions of human beings living in society.

**Metaethics**

* ‘Meta’ means beyond. Metaethics means discussion of something which is beyond the boundaries of ethical issues.
* Metaethics deals with the meaning and linguistic analysis of the basic concepts and judgments of ethics. Linguistic analysis is related to philosophy of language and is beyond ethical judgment.
* Such actions which are beyond ethics, are necessary for ethical activities. To be good or bad in voluntary actions, we have to know what ‘good’ and ‘right’ mean. So first we will know the meaning and then we will act voluntarily.
* Such linguistic analysis is necessary because normal meaning sometimes lead us to confusion and mistakes.
* If someone says, ‘go to hell’, then what does it mean? A tall man and a tall building – does the word ‘tall’ mean the same height in these two cases? ‘Small’ is a small word, but ‘big’ is not a big word. What is the problem?
* Ethics deals with voluntary actions. But metaethics deals with the meaning of concepts and statements used for voluntary actions in ethics.
* Ethics is the first-order study of ethical issues; but metaethics is the second-order study of the ethical issues. Thus metaethics is at the upper level of ethics.
* Metaethics is also considered as a method of ethical study.

**Practical Ethics and Applied Ethics**

* Practical application of ethics started in the ancient period.
* In Plato’s book *The Republic* it is discussed what justice is and how should the citizens behave to make the state an ideal state.
* Aristotle also discussed about ethical behavior and his view is that human beings should not do anything extreme.
* Aristotle also said that human beings should follow the middle path in their voluntary actions.
* Aristotle said that the middle path is the golden mean in behavior.
* Medieval writers were also concerned with issues whether it is always wrong to kill and whether going to war is justified.
* In the modern period moral philosophers presented views regarding how we should behave to attain happiness in life. This was a practical way of the application of ethical norms, rules and standards.
* In 1960s students in USA went through civil rights movement and were concerned with the Vietnam war. (Honderich, T., ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.42)
* This sort of practical issues led to the development of questions about what can be right or wrong and good or bad in the social system. It is true that US morality collapsed in 1960s.
* After the end of the second world war, due to the devastating destructions all over the world, the so called modern period of civilization ended and postmodernism developed in 1960s.
* In this situation, with the hope to get a better world, philosophers and scientists developed applied ethics in the different fields of knowledge.
* Thus we have got at present biomedical ethics, environmental ethics, business ethics, ethics of journalism and ethics of computer science, known as cyber ethics.
* On the basis of the overall view of the development of applied ethics, it is clear that ethics is so important that the present human civilization won’t be able to move on without the help of applied ethics.
* One classic example of this importance of ethics is that, in USA the highest specialist doctors in medical science could not decide what death is in the case of patients in irreversible coma.
* In this situation, in 1983 a commission was formed in USA with the title “President’s Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine”. (Copi, I. M. and Cohen, C., *Introduction to Logic*, New Delhi: Prentice-Hall, 2001, 9th edition, p. 174.)
* It is a very strong evidence that science needs the help of ethics to move on. This is the universal and overwhelming importance of ethics.

**Consequential Ethics**

* Consequential is something which has a consequence.
* Consequence means result. Consequence is that which we get as the result of some action.
* If the consequence of the voluntary action is good then we consider the action as good or right.
* What sort of consequences or results should be considered to be good or acceptable to us?
* It will be difficult to develop a standard of judgment of consequences.
* In different societies, in different social status in the same society, in different situations, the judgments will be different.
* We need to develop a standard for judgment of the consequence so that all people will accept it as a general decision. This view is considered as consequentialism.
* In ethics pleasure is considered as such a general standard, which all people will accept.
* In ethics this view is also known as hedonism.
* The word ‘hedonism’ developed from the Greek word ‘hedonikos’, which means pleasure.
* All people like pleasure; so pleasure is the general standard for judgment of all actions in all situations.
* Hedonism developed in the ancient period.
* Hedonism has two forms, viz., egoistic and altruistic.
* Egoistic hedonism holds that people should do their voluntary actions for their self-interest, their own pleasure.
* This view is considered as psychological.
* Altruistic hedonism holds that people should not act only for their own pleasure and self-interest, rather sometimes they should act for the pleasure of others.
* This view is considered as social.
* With the development of consequentialism over the periods, a distinction was made between pleasure and happiness.
* Happiness is better than pleasure.
* Pleasure is sensual and physical; happiness is mental, social, intellectual and spiritual.
* In the modern period happiness has been accepted as the good consequence of voluntary actions.
* Utilitarianism developed in the modern period; it considers the utility of happiness from different standpoints.
* It was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and it was modified by James Mill (1773-1836) and finally by John Stuart Mill (1806-73).
* Utilitarianism is the best form of hedonism.

**J. S. Mill’s Utilitarianism**

* Utilitarianism was developed by:   
  – Joseph Butler (1692-1752), English theologian, bishop   
  – As a bishop he held that we should act with benevolence.   
   – Lord Shaftesbury (1671-1713), English philosopher and politician.   
   – As a politician he held that we should work for the good of others.

– Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Scottish philosopher.

– Hutcheson applied the benevolent and political ideas of Butler and Shaftesbury in the moral form and held that consequence or the result of good conduct is the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

– Hutcheson’s view was used in English utilitarian activities as a slogan.

– In the nineteenth century Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and John Stuart Mill worked as social reformers and for this purpose they accepted the principle of greatest happiness for the greatest number.

– They accepted this principle as utilitarianism because this principle has the most utility or usefulness for the society.

* According to Mill’s utilitarianism we should act so that the consequence or the result will be the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.
* The main features of Mill’s utilitarianism can be presented by the following five statements.   
  (i) Pleasure or happiness are the only things that are desirable.   
  (ii) The proof that something is desirable is the fact that people do actually desire it.

(iii) Each person’s happiness is good for that person, so the general happiness is good for everybody.

(iv) People do desire other things, but they desire those things as means to pleasure or happiness.   
 (v) Out of two pleasures if one is preferred by those who are well acquainted with the both, then the preferred pleasure is superior to the other and therefore is acceptable.

* Mill’s utilitarianism commits the naturalistic fallacy.
* Judgment of goodness or rightness in ethics is done with social norms, customs, rules. These are normative judgments.
* If normative concepts are defined by natural facts then this is fallacious.
* This sort of fallacy is also considered as category mistake. Natural facts and normative ideas are of two different categories.
* It is also a problem as to decide how to measure which happiness is the greatest.
* Measurements are based on weight, length, volume, etc. These are material or physical.
* Happiness is not material; pleasure can be physical, but can it be measured?
* Greatest happiness principle can also violate humanistic spirit.
* Negative utilitarianism has also developed from the failure of greatest happiness principle.

**Nonconsequential ethics**

* The opposite view of consequentialism is known as nonconsequentialism. This view is also used with the title deontological theory.
* The main theme of this view is that we shall not make ethical judgments of our voluntary actions on the basis of the consequence of the actions.
* Consequentialism is experience based but nonconsequentialism is rational analysis based and lead to universal and undeniable moral rules.
* In the history of ethics, the nonconsequential theory was developed by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in the eighteenth century.
* Before this view was established as a theory, it was practiced in the medieval period from the standpoint of religious norms and rituals ‒ not for any consequence rather on the basis of religious spirits.
* This medieval view is known as act nonconsequentialism.
* There is also rule nonconsequentialism which was developed by Kant.
* One main theme in Kant’s ethics is that there is nothing which is good without qualification except good will (good will, in bengali সদিচ্ছা).
* This view of good will is true both materialistically and intellectually.
* For moral judgment of voluntary actions, Kant first held that it is possible to set up valid universal rules by reasoning alone.
* Kant held that for an absolute moral view, two requirements are to be fulfilled, viz., first it must be logically consistent and not self-contradictory, secondly, it must be universalizable.
* Kant explained his standpoint with mathematical examples.   
  ‒ No circles are squares. All triangles are three sided.
* Living parasitically would be immoral.
* The rule that ‘Always be a parasite, living off of someone else’ is illogical, inconsistent and not universalizable.
* People act with inclination and also with the sense of duty. Even the same action can be done from both these standpoints.
* If people act forcing themselves to act from the sense of duty, only then it will be moral.
* This is duty for duty’s sake.
* Kant upheld his moral principle as *Categorical Imperative*. It means that an action is immoral if the rule which would authorize it cannot be made into a rule for all human beings.
* For example, suppose a man is thinking, ‘why should I work hard to live, why don’t I steal from others?’
* Then he made a rule: ‘I shall never work hard, but steal what I need from other human beings’.
* The man then formed the universal law: ‘No human being should ever work, but all human beings should steal what they need from each other’.
* It is impossible to make a law like this.
* Only universalizable and logically consistent rule will be acceptable in ethics.

Kant’s moral principle is Categorical Imperative. ‘Categorical’ means unconditional; ‘imperative’ means command. Moral rules must be universalizable unconditional commands.

* We should always consider maxims in this way.
* For maintaining morality, all human beings must be considered as end in itself and not as a means to something else.
* Fairness and equal treatments are necessary for moral systems.
* A man in extreme tragedy may make a maxim that, ‘From self-love I should end my life because to continue this life will bring more badness than good in my life’.
* Such a maxim cannot be accepted. It is a self-contradiction to have love for life and distroy life.
* If there are two moral rules both of which are universal and yet conflicting, then how to act in such a situation?   
   ‒Never do anything to kill a person;   
   ‒Never break your promise.   
   ‒Both are universal, but sometime one universality will lead to the rejection of the other.
* To solve such conflicting universal moral views, consequentialism is necessary. In other words, nonconsequentialism will need the help of concequentialism.
* Two universal views can be such that one is categorical and the other is not categorical. i.e., one is unconditional and other is conditional.
* Never kill
* Never kill except in self-defense   
   ‒ which one is better?  
   ‒ is the categorical one incomplete in   
   meaning?   
   ‒ this case is also consequential  
  — Kant did not consider the fact that universal moral rules may have exceptions.
* Can inclination be better than pure rational thought in morality?
* Never help anyone in need ‒ it can be universalized. But it may backfire. We also need consequential views.
* In Peter Singer’s lifeboat ethics, Kant’s categorical imperative will be useless.

**Animal Rights**

* In the second half of the twentieth century, scientists, social activists and environmentalists became aware that research on animals and human foods and drugs were harmful for the environment.
* Then in USA Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drug Administration(FDA) started their investigation on these issues.
* Animals were killed using poison in their food or injecting poison in their body to test how much poison can kill how much percentage of the total number of poisoned animals.
* To determine the pattern of use of chemicals in human food and cosmetics, this sort of research were done on animals.
* In the decade of 1970s, Peter Singer started animal liberation movement. He upheld that the way the black people and women were excluded from moral considerations, animals are also excluded in the same way from moral considerations.
* Singer used the term speciesism in this context and compared speciesism with racism and sexism.
* Singer established his view of equal moral standing, i.e., moral status and rights will be equal.
* He made a fundamental presupposition and it was the basic moral principle for him. This principle is: any being for moral standing counts for one, and none for more than one.
* One question can be raised: how can man, animals, blacks and woman be considered as equal in moral rights?   
  -- Can it be done about man and animal that both can reason or talk? No.
* One point is that animals can suffer like man.
* From the standpoint of suffering, man, animals, blacks, woman, all are of the same one type.
* Singer thus established his view of moral standing. His view is that: we should work in such a way that we can diminish suffering as much as possible.
* This principle is equal for all man, black and white, man and woman, and also for animals because animals also can suffer like human beings. This is animal rights.
* Like Singer, Tom Regan also supports the animal rights. Regan’s view is that some animals have rights.
* Like Singer, Regan holds that varieties of human activities affect animals. Such activities are scientific and commercial researches, use of animal foods and recreational use of animals in sports, zoos and use as pets.
* To support his view of animal rights, Regan raises a question – can human beings be used the way animals are used by man?
* To make this standpoint clear Regan makes a distinction between moral agents and moral patients.
* Moral agents are adult, competent, rational; they do duties, choose rights and so on.
* Moral patients are incompetent, immature, infant, of low intelligence and have no duties.
* Moral patients cannot act morally, but they can be acted on morally by moral agents.
* Both moral agents and moral patients possess moral rights.
* In the same way Regan claims that all the subject-of-a-life deserve equal moral rights.
* Regan supports animal rights in this way.

**Environmental Ethics - Nature**

* In early 1970s scientists found a problem in the Gulf of Mexico.
* The problem that occurred was hypoxia; in hypoxia, dissolved oxygen level in water becomes very low.
* In low level of oxygen, fishes could not survive.
* If many nutrients are used too much then oxygen level of water becomes too low.
* The adverse results that happened are:

Marine species species became very low

Tourism and recreational activities in that are were damaged.

* One more reason of this damage was the use of fertilizer and another cause was use of DDT and insecticides.
* Use of such chemicals is the cause of problems such as,
* If some organisms are not killed by insecticides then they become insecticide resistant and more problems develop.
* In such cases, either insecticides will be used more and more or new stronger insecticides are to be used.
* This will damage the environment.
* This will also create social problems.
* Scientists do not think about such social and environmental problems.
* Scientists go for further research to develop new ways.
* Only moral philosophers think about what should be done.
* In this way a relation between moral philosophy and environment developed and we have got environmental ethics.
* Environmental ethics is a systematic study of the moral relations between human beings and their natural environment.
* The problems to be dealt are:

--Moral norms must be developed.

--Nature of norms to be considered.

--To consider to whom to norms to be applied.

--To what human responsibilities are to be related.

--How these matter are to justified.

**Environmental Ethics - Social**

* In the modern period, with the rapid development in economics, social system has also gone through rapid change.
* British colonialism developed. See pirates developed. State system and administration got involved with corruption.
* Conflict between capitalism and communism developed.
* Social and administrative crisis developed extremely in the 19th century.
* Public authority became like commercial products, could be purchased and sold.
* Britain became like the sinkhole of corruption, and London became like gang-ridden society.
* This problem also developed in USA. The idea of 5% man developed in USA.
* In administration strong-arm method developed.
* In USA water gate scandal happened.
* In this perspective in late 20th century administrative ethics developed in USA.
* The American Society of Public Administration also developed.
* Academic and institutional study of administration ethics thus developed all over the world.

**Virtue Ethics**

* Virtue ethics is different from consequential ethics and nonconsequential ethics.
* Both consequential and nonconsequential ethics are theoretical.
* Theory of greatest happiness for the greatest number of people is a consequential view.
* Nonconsequential view is the theory that we shall do our duty for the sake of duty.
* None of these two theories has given an idea about how to practice these theories.
* Virtue ethics explains how we can practice or apply these theories in our actual life.
* In virtue ethics, the main two themes are: (1) virtue, (2) practical wisdom.
* In the West, virtue ethics was initiated by Plato and Aristotle.
* In the East, it was initiated by Confucius and Mencius. Mencius is a Chinese Confucian philosopher of the 4th century BC.
* In the West virtue ethics prevailed until the enlightenment in the 18th century.
* Virtue ethics did not prevail in the nineteenth century. But it reemerged in the late 1950s.
* Virtue ethics does not uphold the spirit of the modern period; it gives emphasis on the post-modernist spirit.
* Since the late 1950s, in the present contemporary period, virtue ethics gives main emphasis on the concept of virtue and on practical wisdom.
* Virtue means an excellent trait of character.
* To do something good or bad is not virtue. Goodness or badness are related with voluntary actions of a person. But virtue is related with the character of a person.
* A person can tell a truth following a rule or may act for happiness following another rule. These may not be virtuous.
* Voluntary actions can be done only due to a persons’ habits, without any rational thinking. Virtue is not such habit based.
* A virtue is a multi-track disposition,   
  -- to notice, to expect, to value, to feel, to desire and then to choose and act.
* To possess a virtue is to be a person with a certain complex mindset.
* Suppose, a person likes honesty and chooses,   
   ─ to work with honest people,   
   ─ to have honest friends,   
   ─ to bring up children to be honest,   
   ─ to deplore dishonesty and not to be amused by tales of chicanery and despises those who   
   succeed through deception,  
   ─ not to think about them clever,   
   ─ not to be pleased or surprised when honesty triumphs,  
   ─ to be shocked when those near and dear do what is dishonest.
* If honesty is valued in such a multi-track complex mindset then it is a trait of character and it is virtue.
* Knowledge of what virtue is — is not enough to be virtuous.
* One may tell a lie to prevent someone else’s hurt feelings; is it virtue?
* Is it always right to act with courage?
* Someone who is generous, honest, compassionate and courageous, can be considered as virtuous; but may act wrongly.
* To be virtuous in the true sense, one needs practical wisdom as the guide line for virtuous activities.
* Motive and emotion for virtue are not enough; rational choice is necessary.
* Children and adolescents may work with honesty, compassion, generosity and courage; but they morally virtuous?
* Children and adolescents can be very nice, but not virtuous in the moral sense.
* Virtue can be inclination based, what Aristotle called natural virtue; but perfection of virtue needs practical wisdom.
* If a person is thoughtless, insensitive, reckless, shortsighted then virtue will not be attained.
* Practical wisdom is the knowledge or understanding that enables its possessor to do the right thing in any given situation.
* Practical comes from the experience of life; it is necessary to be wise about human beings and human life and to be mindful of the consequences of possible actions.
* Practical wisdom needs capacity to recognize some features of a situation as more important than others, the relevant ones.
* On the whole, practical wisdom is possessed by those who understand what is truly worthwhile, truly important and thereby truly advantageous in life, who know, in short, how to life well.

**Ethics and Religion**

* Religion is based on the belief in a supernatural reality.
* Beliefs makes people emotional and impels them to act for the supernatural reality.
* There is a close connection between religion and morality.
* Religious customs were developed before the moral customs were developed.
* Moral customs developed from religious customs.
* Duties were considered in two ways: first, duty was considered as duty towards fellow human beings; and secondly, duty was considered as duty towards God.
* Morality takes a high place in religion.
* In the name of religion, sometimes immoral rites are practiced.
* It happened in the strong sense in Christianity in the medieval period.
* Hypatia, a great mathematician, was killed in the 4th century AD, only because Hypatia was a female mathematician, a teacher and very popular at that time.
* Religious activities may turn to be liable for abnormality and perversions.
* Religion is very conservative; something may happen which is not accepted by society.
* It also appears that the more religious an individual or a society is, the more moral they will also be.
* Large sections of mankind at present appear to be giving up past religious practices.
* Religion includes a wide range of duties than morality does.
* This is due to religious norms, rituals, practices like worship, prayer, observance of rites and sacraments.
* Some religious activities are not moral and man-directed, but are religious and God-directed.
* Religion is more an emotional experience than morality.
* Religion implies conduct and knowledge. For morality knowledge is a means for better actions.
* Religion has its center in God; morality has its center in man.
* Religion is involved with morality in the following two ways:

—Morality is involved with metaphysical outlook.

—Religion gives objectivity to moral values.

**Ethics, Absolutism and Relativism**

* In all sciences there are universal views, which are considered as absolute. Ethics is also a science, and therefore we can also expect some universal views in ethics.
* However, there is a difference between ethics and other sciences. Ethics is totally different from natural science. Ethics is related to social values, and as such to some extent similar to social science. But ethics is different from social sciences in the sense that it social but normative science.
* So, the issue of absolutism and relativism in ethics are not like the other sciences.
* The following are the arguments against ethical absolutism.
* In ethics there are moral standards among which one can be better than another. This problem prevails in altruism and egoism.
* Similarly, in hedonism one pleasure may be preferred than another pleasure. At present this sort of choosing is not accepted.
* Telling a lie is an evil act. But telling a lie for saving a life from a killer is an evil of a lesser degree. This is another example that absolutism does not work in ethics.
* In the past slavery was considered good in some societies and was considered bad in other societies.
* From the above examples it is clear that ethical judgments are relative not absolute.
* Moral judgments can be considered as emotion based. From this standpoint moral judgments will always relative.
* Same person can be emotional at one time and not emotional about the same issue later on.
* About the same issue different persons can have different sorts of emotions.
* Emotion is psychological and may differ in many different ways. As such ethical statements will always be relative.
* Logical positivists considered ethics as meaningless. It is also relative. Their verification principle is not absolute.
* From the standpoint of religion ethical relativism and absolutism will be of different types.
* There can be religious laws for morality which are unchangeable and permanent and as such absolute.
* But in reality in spite of absolute law, differences of opinion develop regarding what should be or what should not be in some issues.
* Finally it is the reality that ethical norms or rules cannot be universal and in this sense absolute.
* Ethical norms or rules will be relative.
* In such a reality it may be considered that morality will collapse in the relativistic moral contexts.
* If so, the moral progress will not happen.
* In such a situation it will not be possible to claim that a person is better than another person.
* From the standpoint that ethics is relative, ethics can be claimed to subjective.
* In ethics by the word subjective is meant that,   
   (i) for the validity an ethical judgment depends on the mental state of a particular person.  
   (ii) Because mental state may change in the same person or from person to person, an action   
   may be right at one time and wrong at another time or may be right and wrong at the sametime.
* The simplest meaning of subjectivism is the view that when someone says that an action is right all he means is that he likes this action.
* All subjective theories are based on liking or disliking of a person and as such are psychological. Being psychological all subjective theories are naturalistic. This is problem for ethics.
* When one will say that ‘This action is right’ he will say this because he likes this action.
* Because moral judgments depend on the mental state of a person, such judgments will like commands, exclamations or wishes, but not judgments in the true sense.
* Given this situation moral judgments will be always false or not be possible to prove to be true.
* Because of the state of mind, about the same moral judgment one can say that the judgment is right and another can say that the judgment is wrong. So, subjective view will lead to contradiction.
* Such subjectivism will lead to scepticism in moral judgment. By scepticism it is meant that one can doubt anything he wants.
* Since moral judgments are based on state of mind, it is usual that one can express doubt about what there is in the mind of another person.
* All these are the criticisms of subjective ethics, which is the same as relative ethics.

**Rawls’ Theory of Justice**

* A classic view of justice was first established by Plato. According to Plato, everyone will do his own activities according to his own social position.
* But social rules and circumstances may be such that a person can be unable to adjust and to do his duties in appropriate way.
* Because of such problems in all classic views of justice, John Rawls developed a new concept of justice.
* According to Rawls for getting justice, one condition is that society should be fair. The other condition of Rawls is that the society should be such that all citizens in the society are free and equal.
* Rawls’ main view is that justice as fairness is the most egalitarian principle, i.e., according to this principle all people in the society will equal rights.
* With this purpose, Rawls thinks that the basic structure of the society has to be built up in the following pattern.   
  — All the political and social institutions are to be arranged in a just way.   
   — The institutions will be political constitution, legal system, economy, family, etc.
* Rawls thinks that such arrangement is a society’s basic structure and such a basic structure will have good positive influence on a person’s life prospects, goals, attitudes, relationships and character.
* Rawls also thinks that justification of this structure will make life better.
* Two Guideline Ideas of Justice as Fairness
* Rawls gives emphasis on social cooperation which is necessary for citizens to lead a good life. Social cooperation should be fair to all citizens regarded as free and as equal.
* Rawls gives two theses for this purpose, one is the negative thesis and the other is the positive thesis.
* Rawls’ negative thesis is that citizens do not deserve to be born in a rich or a poor family, to be born more or less gifted than others or to be born male or female, etc. For example, the fact that a citizen was born rich and male does not make him to be favored by social institutions.
* Rawls’ positive thesis is that social goods are to be distributed equally, but if an unequal distribution is good for everyone’s advantage, then unequal distribution is good.
* Just Distribution of Goods
* Principle of just distribution of goods consists of two other principles — (a) the fair equality of opportunity principle and (b) the difference principle.

**The fair equality of opportunity principle**

* This principle states that social or economic inequalities associated with particular offices or jobs can only exist if these offices or jobs are open to everyone under condition of fair equality of opportunity.
* No one should be excluded from, for instance, the best-paid jobs, on non-relevant grounds such as sexual orientation or race.
* This principle of equality of opportunity includes provision of education to allow all people to develop their talent.

**The difference principle**

* This principle insists that any social or economic inequalities should only be tolerated on condition that they bring greatest benefits to the most disadvantaged members of the society.
* This is an implementation of a strategy known as ‘maximin’.
* Maximin means ‘maxmise the minumum’ which explains that choose the option which gives the best deal for the worst case.
* Consider the example of fair wages in a just society.

**Imagine two situations**

* In the first situation, most people earn a high wage, but ten percent of the population can barely earn enough to survive.
* In the second situation, although the average standard of living is far lower, the worst off ten percent of the population have a reasonable standard of living.
* Rawls claims that the second of the two situations is preferable because it guarantees that everyone in the society will be achieving a reasonable standard of living, the worst off are not that badly off.
* In the first situation, however, although there is a good chance of ending up quite well off, there is also a significant risk of being on a wage that barely allows you to survive.
* Adopting the maximin strategy, we should minimize the worst risks, and should opt for the second situation.

**Theories of Punishment**

* Ethics deals with the judgments of voluntary actions of human beings, to decide which action is good or bad, right or wrong. From this standpoint rules and principles are developed for good and right conduct.
* This is the positive aspect of ethics, the goal is to establish goodness and rightness. To make this positive aspect stronger we also need a negative aspect. While the positive aspect is to establish goodness and rightness, the negative aspect is to prevent or to stop what is bad and what is wrong.
* To stop or to prevent something to happen as bad or wrong, it is necessary to know how something bad or wrong happens. The way we studied what we mean by good, in the same way we can study what we mean by bad.
* In an objective or a general sense of the term ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’, something is bad or wrong if it is a crime or an error or a sin.
* A crime is the violation of a state law; it is done voluntarily by someone. And it is bad. Punishment is given for a crime.
* An error is also bad, but not like a crime. An error happens involuntarily, it may happen incidentally or accidentally. It may be considered as not appropriate for punishment.
* A sin is a violation of a religious norm or a rule. It is bad and the person is considered as guilty for it and from religious standpoint punishment is due to such an incident.
* To stop or to prevent such bad actions, theories of punishment have been developed in ethics.
* There are three theories of punishment, viz., (a) the deterrent theory, (b) the reformative theory and (c) the retributive theory.

The Deterrent Theory

* According to the deterrent theory, an offender is given punishment to deter others from the same wrong-doing, i.e., the others will be afraid that they will also be punished for wrong-doing.
* In this way an example is set that anyone who commits something wrong will be punished.
* One criticism of this theory is that according to this theory a person (who got punishment) is used as a means for the good of others.
* This criticism is not correct. It is because, punishment (except capital punishment) will good for the person himself who got punishment; it will help him to be good and not to do something bad or wrong.
* In such cases, others will be benefited being motivate not to do bad; this is only a secondary sub-effect of the use of this theory.
* Another strong criticism of this theory is that sometimes some innocent persons can be punished to show an example for others so that they do not do the same wrong event. Such instances can be considered as a misuse of the deterrent theory.
* Another problem is that sometimes extreme or very severe punishment is given, more than what is due or what the offender deserves. It is done to make others feel afraid of punishment and to deter from wrong-doing. To do so is unfair and unjust and is the misuse of deterrent theory.
* Finally, the contradiction in the deterrent theory is that those who misuse the deterrent theory, they do not get deterrent punishment for the misuse of the deterrent theory.

The Reformative Theory

* According to the reformative theory the aim of punishment is to reform the conduct of the offender himself. This is a popular view, but it is also often misunderstood and is criticized.
* One can say that if the reformation of conduct is the aim, then why to give punishment? Reformation of conduct can be made by giving education. It is true; but if the offender is an educated person then we see that education may not function.
* Another answer to the above criticism is that punishment and education are totally different, and one cannot be replaced by the other. Education is for people in general, but punishment is only for the people doing wrong.
* Reformation of offender is through punishment which has pain, but education has no pain. Reformative theory of punishment strictly imply infliction of pain. Pain is used here as a method of reformation.
* Reformation of offender can be done by kindness or forgiveness.
* But the question is: in between reformation by pain of punishment or by the feeling of kindness and forgiveness – which one will be more fruitful?
* It will be very difficult to come to a decision in this theory in such a case and there is no general rule on this matter.
* Capital punishment cannot be accepted according to this theory, because we do not know what will happen to the offender after death. Moreover, reformation of conduct cannot be done on a dead human being.
* Pain of punishment can be of two types, viz., physical pain and mental pain. The effect of physical pain will be stronger in reforming a person.
* If someone is punished by imprisonment then the solitary life in the prison, detached from the society, will be mental suffering for the offender. In later life, such offenders are disliked by the society. It may cause severe metal pain of the offender but may not do any positive effect for reformation.
* Reformative value of such suffering lies in its capacity for making the offender to see the evil of his wrong-doing.