

Ethics Preview



ETHICS

GS Mains Paper IV

For Civil Services Exams

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Chapter 1 Ethics

Essence of Ethics

Essence of Ethics refers to the intrinsic nature or inherent quality of Ethics. The term 'Ethics' is significantly complex and can be understood from different viewpoints as follows:

Way of Living

The English word ethics is derived from the Greek word "ethos", which means "way of living". Thus, Ethics is concerned with the appropriate way of living. Way of living can be further thought of in terms of rights, obligations and virtues. Thus, we can say that Ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong which prescribe what humans ought to do in terms of rights and obligations and which virtues should they possess.

To elaborate, ethics includes standards pertaining to rights such as right to life, right to privacy, and others. It also includes standards pertaining to obligations such as refrain from fraud, theft, speak truth and others. Moreover, ethics includes standards pertaining to virtues such as honesty, compassion, and others.

Ethics as a Discipline

Ethics may be defined as the systematic study of human actions from the point of view of their rightfulness or wrongfulness, as means for the attainment of the ultimate happiness. In simple words ethics refers to what is good and the way to get it, and what is bad and how to avoid it. It refers to what ought to be done to achieve what is good and what ought not to be done to avoid what is evil.

As a discipline, ethics is the reflective study of what is good or bad in that part of human conduct for which humans have some personal responsibility. Thus, Ethics deals with voluntary actions. We can distinguish between human actions and actions of human: human actions are those actions that are done by human consciously, deliberately and in view of an end. Actions of human may not be wilfully, voluntarily, consciously and deliberately done but all the same they are done by human (e.g. sleeping, walking, etc.). It is the intention which makes the difference between human action and action of human. In ethics we deal only with human actions.

Ethics as a science

Like any other science, Ethics is a systematized body of knowledge gathered through careful observation, reasoning and even experimentation. However, the subject matter of ethics is abstract and cannot be tested in a scientific laboratory. Rather the subject matter is deduced on the basis of reasoning and arguments. Thus, it is not possible to have same level of objectivity in study of ethics, as is there in natural sciences. Therefore, at most, ethics constitute inexact science or social science.

Moreover, Ethics is distinguished from the natural sciences, inasmuch as it has a direct reference to an end that human beings desire to attain. Thus, ethics as a science is concerned with an end or ideal or standard. Most sciences, instead, are concerned with certain uniformities of our experience – with the ways in which certain classes of objects (such as rocks or plants) are found to exist, or with the ways in which certain classes of events (such as phenomena of sound or electricity) are found to occur. These sciences have no direct reference to any end that is to be achieved or to any ideal by reference to which the facts are judged.

Theory as well as practice

Ethics is also theoretical and practical. It is theoretical in as much as it provides the fundamental principles on the basis of which moral judgements are arrived at. It is practical in as much as it is concerned about an end to be gained, and the means of attaining it.

Nature of Ethics

In order to understand the nature of ethics, let us go through the following features:

1. Dynamic: Ethics keep on evolving over a period of time. What is considered ethical in a society may change with the passage of time. For instance, committing sati was considered ethical in the past. It is even now considered ethical by some sections of the society. However, by the large section of society it is now considered as unethical.

2. Cannot be equated with feelings: Some people tend to equate ethics with feelings. However, feeling of a person may deviate the person from doing what is right. Thus, feelings of a person may encourage him to engage ethical or even unethical behaviour.

3. Cannot be equated with Social norms: Ethics are not even same as norms of the society, norms of the society may seek to implement high ethical standards

but there may be instance when norms themselves are unethical. For instance, norms of few sections of Indian society permit untouchability, forced labour and so on.

4. Cannot be equated with Social consensus: Ethics cannot be equated with whatever society accepts. For instance, corruption is acceptable to many people in the society but still corruption is unethical.

Further lack of consensus on many issues makes it impossible to equate ethics with whatever society accepts. For instances, some people accept abortion while others do not.

Moral Philosophy

Morals are rules or principles that a person may apply in daily life that are based on what is considered right or wrong, while ethics refer to philosophy behind morals. In other words, morals refer to the first-order beliefs and practices about good and evil which guide our behaviour. On the other hand, Ethics is the explicit philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices. Put it another way, if morals are music, then ethics is musicology.

Ethics is not merely a set of 'codes'. Ethics certainly deals with moral codes yet one cannot identify ethics to moral codes. Ethics is not primarily to restrict one's behaviour, rather to help one to find what is good and how to get it. The obligatory character of ethical norms dilute the very purpose of ethical enquiry, i.e. to discover the most ultimate principles of explanation or the most ultimate reasons why one ought to do anything.

Thus, ethics is often referred as philosophical analysis of morals. Therefore, Ethics is also known as moral philosophy. We can also say that Moral philosophy is the branch of philosophy that contemplates what is right and wrong, and how to attain right and how to avoid wrong.

Methods used in Ethics

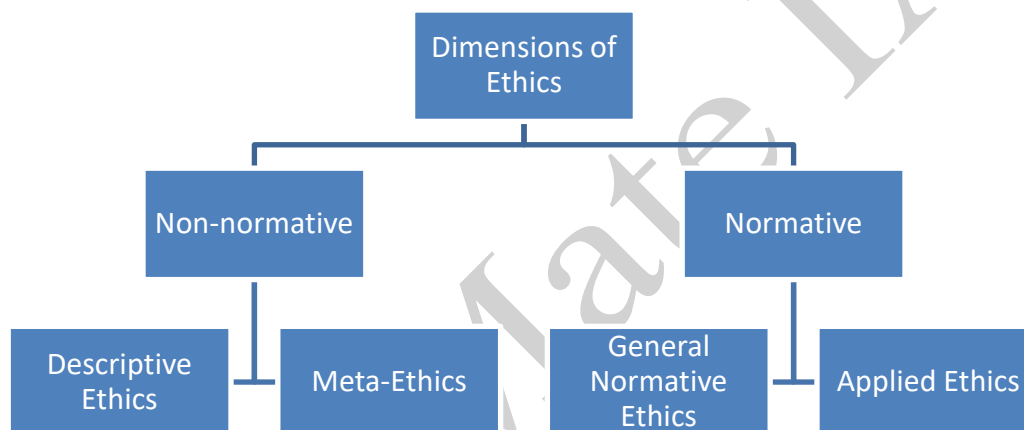
Ethics, as a philosophical discipline, makes use of the methods used in philosophy. Thus in ethics, both the inductive method and deductive methods are used. Deduction (universal to the particular) is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. Deductive reasoning begins with a universal or general truth and leads to knowledge of a particular instance of it. The classical form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism in which

a necessary conclusion is derived from two accepted premises: e.g. All men are mortal, A is a man, and therefore, A is mortal.

Induction (particular to the universal) is a process of arriving at knowledge through experience. Induction begins with the particular and moves to the universal, a generalization that accounts for other examples of the same category or class. For instance, if a number of ravens have been observed, all of which are black, and if no raven has been encountered that is not black, the inferences to the conclusion that the next observed raven will be black or to the general conclusion that all ravens are black, are inductive inferences.

Dimensions of Ethics

There are basically four different dimensions of ethics as described below:



1. Non-normative and Normative Ethics

The non-normative approaches examine morality without concern for making judgements as to what is morally right or wrong. They do not take any moral position regarding moral issues. The normative approaches instead make judgements as to what is morally right or wrong. They take a clear moral position regarding moral issues.

The term normative has been derived from the word 'norm' or 'standards'. Therefore, normative ethics implies that ethics are based on or can be evaluated on the basis of a standard or norm. For instance, a pro-social behaviour of helping old man crossing the road is considered ethical because prior norms exist in our society which consider helping elders an ethical.

2. Descriptive Ethics

Among the two non-normative approaches to ethics, descriptive ethics describe

and sometimes try to explain the moral and ethical practices and beliefs of certain societies and cultures. This is what sociologists, anthropologists, and historians often do in their study and research. Thus, descriptive ethics have inputs from other disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology and History.

In their descriptions they do not make judgements about the morality of the practices and beliefs but simply describe the practices observed in the different groups or cultures.

For instance, consider an act of donating organs after death. Such an act is considered ethical by some people. Descriptive ethics would attempt to know how many people do actually believe that it is an ethical act, why they believe so and why others do not believe the same.

3. Meta Ethics

Metaethics (also called Second order ethics) focuses on the analysis of the meanings of the central terms used in ethical reasoning and decision-making. In other words, Metaethics seeks to understand the meaning and nature of ethics itself. For instance, it is concerned with the following fundamental questions pertaining to ethics:

What is the meaning of ethics or judgements? This question deals with attempts to understand and derive consensus over good, bad, right, wrong, etc.

What is the nature/ features of ethics? This question deals with characteristics, relativity (degree), etc.

What is the support in favour of ethics or judgements? This question seeks to find answer or reason about the role or need of ethics.

4. Applied ethics

Ethics are applicable in almost every field where human beings have discretion to act. Ethics regulate the conduct of human beings and study the present conduct for possible improvement in future. Applied ethics cover fields such as politics, religion, medical profession, legal profession, criminology, environment, etc.

Division of Ethics

Philosophers today usually divide them into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Metaethics investigates the

origin and meaning of ethical concepts. It studies where our ethical principles come from and what they mean. It tries to analyse the underlying principles of ethical values.

Normative ethics tries to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. It is a more practical task. It is a search for an ideal litmus test of proper behaviour. Applied ethics involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, environmental concerns, homosexuality, and so on. In applied ethics, using the conceptual tools of metaethics and normative ethics, one tries to resolve these controversial issues.

Often the lines of distinction between metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics are often blurry. For instance, the issue of abortion is an applied ethical topic in as much as it involves a specific type of controversial behaviour. But it is also an issue involving normative principles such as the right to decide for oneself and the right to life and an issue having metaethical issues such as, "where do rights come from?" and "what kind of beings have rights?".

Ethics and Religion

It is sometimes argued that without God or religion, ethics would have no point; and therefore, insofar as God or religion is in question, so is ethics. Infact, some people equate ethics with religion. However, though religion advocate high ethical standards, yet if ethics were confined to religion, then only religious people would be ethical. Although belief in God or religion can be an added reason for our being moral, it is not necessary to relate it to God or to any religion.

Moreover, religion may also sanction unethical practices. For instance, Polygamy is allowed in some religions. Also, religion may even encourage people to indulge unethical practices. For instance, over indulgence in religious beliefs may also lead to communalism.

Importance of Studying Ethics

Today, more than ever, the importance of ethics is felt at every sphere of human life. The situation in the present world is characterised by Terrorism, civil wars, industrial pollution, misleading advertisements, deceptive labelling, unfair wages, crime syndicates, illegal gambling, forced prostitution, and so on. Besides, the power of religions to inspire moral conduct is continuing to decline.

Truly, there seems to be hardly a few areas in life remain untouched by growing demoralization. The question that one may ask in this precarious situation is: Are we being sucked into a moral vacuum? Is this our way to the end of ethics?

We can point out at least three reasons why we should study ethics:

First, the study of moral philosophy or ethics can deepen our reflection on the ultimate questions of life. The study of ethics helps a person to look at his own life critically and to evaluate his actions/choices/decisions. It assists a person in knowing what he/she really is and what is best for him/her and what he/she has to do in order to attain it.

Second, the study of moral philosophy can help us to think better about morality. Moral philosophy can help us to clarify our moral positions when we make judgements. It improves our perspective, and makes it more reflective and better thought out. It can also improve our thinking about specific moral issues. In our everyday life we are confronted with situations in which we have to decide what is the correct course of action and what is to be avoided.

Whether we choose to act or we refrain from acting, we are in either case making a choice. Every decision or choice we make we do so for reasons. However, we should agree that some of these reasons are better than the others in judging the rightness of the decision or choice. However, there seems to be a common agreement that we should all strive to do the right thing, to do what is morally acceptable in a given situation or circumstance. However, the issue of disagreement is over the question of what exactly is the right thing to do.

Third, the study of moral philosophy can help us to sharpen our general thinking processes. It trains our mind to think logically and reasonably and to handle moral issues with greater clarity. Ethics becomes inevitable as by nature human being is a 'social' being, a being living in relationship with other fellow beings and with the nature around. All actions, whether one is aware of it or not, some way or another affects the others. In order to make a decision/judgement one bases himself on a standard of right and wrong even though the measure may not be the same at all times.

Thus, ethical problems confront everybody. Nobody can really get through life without ethics, even if one may not be aware of the ethical principles. Consciously or unconsciously all of us are every day making moral decisions. Whether we are

aware of it or not, the fact is that we do have ethical attitudes and are taking moral stances every day of our lives.

Consequences of Ethics in Human interactions

Discussion on consequences of ethics in human interactions basically imply that we want to know the answer to a fundamental question in the study of ethics, i.e. -Why should we be moral?

Helps in attaining ultimate aim of life: In every human person there is a deep desire for good. Human beings by nature tend to be good. Each man/woman desires what is best for himself/herself. The ethical principles and moral practices help one to attain what is best. It helps a person to perfect himself/herself as a moral being.

Morality has to do more with one's interior self than the practice of some customs or set rules. Viewed from this point, morality is a deep-down desire in a human being and is something to do with the very nature of human being. The rational nature of human being makes him/her aware of certain fundamental principles of logical and moral reasoning. This means that there is not only a subjective aspect to every human action but also an objective one that prompts a human person to base himself/herself on certain common principles.

Existence of society: We also find that for the functioning of any society we need certain rules and regulations. The institutions which are designed to make life easier and better for human being, cannot function without certain moral principles. However, here the question of individual freedom can also come in. How far the society can go on demanding? Should it not respect the freedom of the individual? Is morality made for man or man is made for morality?

Morality is a lot like nutrition. Most of us have never had a course in nutrition or even read much about it. Yet many of us do have some general knowledge of the field, of what we need to eat and what not. However, we also make mistakes about these things. Often thinking of the good a particular diet can do in the long run for our health, we may go for it although it may bring no immediate satisfaction. So too is our moral life. While nutrition focuses on our physical health, morality is concerned about our moral health. It seeks to help us determine what will nourish our moral life and what will poison it. It seeks to enhance our lives, to help us to live better lives. Morality aims to provide us with a common point of view from which we can come to agreement about what all of

us ought to do. It tries to discover a more objective standpoint of evaluation than that of purely personal preference.

Apart from the broad and ultimate consequences of ethics as discussed above, ethics also have the following consequences:

At individual level, ethics lead to

1. Reduction of conflicts within self.
2. Acceptance in society.
3. Healthy relations with others.
4. Respect from others.

At society level, ethics constitute norms of the society which further determine peace, harmony, law and order in society, opportunities for growth, social bonding, and other social aspects.

Ethics in Public Life

The role of ethics in public life has many dimensions—at one end is the expression of high moral values and at the other, the specifics of action for which a public functionary can be held legally accountable. A system of laws and rules, however, elaborate, cannot provide for all situations. It is, no doubt, desirable, and perhaps possible, to govern the conduct of those who occupy positions in the lower echelons and exercise limited or no discretion. But the higher the echelon in public service, the greater is the ambit of discretion. And it is difficult to provide for a system of laws and rules that can comprehensively cover and regulate the exercise of discretion in high places. We tend to take the core principles and values that underpin our public service for granted but ethics are a rare and fragile phenomenon.

All organizations benefit from a strong set of values and standards and from solid ethical leadership. This is particularly so of public service organisations because of the influence and power exerted over decisions affecting citizens.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life in the United Kingdom, popularly known as the Nolan Committee, has outlined the following seven principles of public life:

1. Selflessness: Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

2. Integrity: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3. Objectivity: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

4. Accountability: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

5. Openness: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

6. Honesty: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

7. Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support above principles by leadership.

Ethics in public and private relationships

There are 2 views on relationship between ethics in personal and professional life.

First view: It is impossible to maintain clear and precise distinction between public ethics and personal ethics. No behaviour in private life is without social implications. Similarly, no social situation or problem is without personal repercussions.

For instance, if a person is leading a happy personal life, then the person is more competent to undertake professional duties and vice-versa.

Second view: According to this view, it is important that the private lives of leaders and administrators are separable from their public life.

To understand whether public and private life ethics and behaviour affect each other, due consideration should be given to the following:

- a. Whether there is conflict of interest arising in public and private life on account of any action or association of the official?
- b. Does the individual follow different ethics in public life and private life?
- c. Does the private matter affect the performance of official duties.

If answers to the above questions are negative, then it can be said that public life is separate from private life. However, such answers would vary from person to person and from situation to situation.

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation where your personal or private interests could, or be seen to, improperly influence the performance of your official duties. A conflict of interest can be actual, perceived, or potential:

An **actual conflict of interest** involves a direct conflict between your official duties and a competing interest or obligation, whether personal or involving a third-party.

A **perceived conflict of interest** occurs where it could reasonably be perceived, or give the appearance, that a competing interest could improperly influence the performance of your official duties and personal responsibilities.

A **potential conflict of interest** arises where you have an interest or obligation, whether personal or involving a third-party, that could conflict with your official duties in the future.

Moral Action

To understand the term "moral action", we need to investigate both these terms "action" and "moral" separately. Let us first understand the meaning of action.

Action

An action or an act is a movement done or generated by an agent to produce a result. It does not occur like an event but is generated by the agent of the act because of the motive or the intention of the agent. Every action consists of an agent, a motive or will or intention, and a result. For example, "Ram gave alms to the poor" is an action.

It did not simply happen like, "The sun rises every day on the east." In this above example, the first statement is an action because John's acted out of an intention

or a motivation to help the poor and along with that he had the end in his mind, i.e., to make the poor happy. The second statement is an event that happens every day without any failure because of the calculation of time and rotation of the earth. There is no intention behind the rising of the Sun. Thus, concept of motive, or will, or intention is a peculiar element of action.

Thus, one thing is clear that a Moral action is any action that proceeds from our deliberate will, intention, or motive. In other words, a moral act must be our own act, i.e., it must spring from our own will. If we act upon the direction of others, then there is no moral content in such acts. From the earliest human history, moral actions and religious actions are inescapably joined. In this case it is difficult to judge the morality of action because we cannot penetrate the depth of his mind. Different philosophers have given different theories in order to explain how action has its moral worth- Deontology, Teleology, and Virtue. In this chapter, we will go through all these theories in order to understand how an action is morally worthy and differentiate between immoral or moral actions.

Moral action

By moral action, it means those actions that are within the moral sphere and are thus objects of moral judgments. These actions are distinguished from non-moral actions, those actions that are devoid of moral quality and scope of moral judgment. In a wider sense the word moral means that in which moral quality, (rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness) is present, i.e., what is right or wrong, good or bad.

Factors to be considered for a moral action

1. Free will: An action performed means that it is performed by a rational agent, not through blind impulse or inclination but knowledge and free choice of means and end. The instinctive action is not a moral action because instinctive actions are found most explicitly in lower animals. Instinctive actions cannot be called as good or bad, right or wrong as animals cannot discriminate between right and wrong. Actions of psychically uninformed, children, actions done under the spell of hypnotic forces, actions are done under compulsion are non-moral.

Non-moral and Immoral

Immoral refers to a conscientious rejection of typical moral standards and has a connotation of evil or wrongdoing. Nonmoral describes actions that are not usually subject to moral concerns, such as which shirt to wear.

2. Intention or motive behind act: For some philosophers, every human act in itself is not good but one if done with good intention. Immanuel Kant considers that an action is morally worthy only if done out of good will. Its value would not be affected by an accidental lack of utility. Moral action is not done for the sake of usefulness or to own any kind of merit.

Two men may have done the same thing, but the act of one may be moral, and that of the other contrary. Take, for instance, a man who feeds the poor out of great pity and another feeds with the motive of gaining position or with some such selfish end. Though the action is the same, the act of the one is moral and that of the other non-moral. When we use the word "moral" it is being used in connection with moral goodness for indicating that we aim at goodness of character.

3. Lack of other motives: It seems that most philosophers regard the motives of a person as factors that make her action morally good or bad. Apparently, some of them think that motives are the only relevant factors for an action's morality. Infact, Actions can be morally bad even if motives are good. Suppose that a person A does something because she thinks it will make B happy. She is however aware that her action will harm C and D. Here, A is only concerned about B and is indifferent to C and D. A is, therefore, acting from a good motive (she wishes to make B happy), but what she does is nevertheless not morally good. The reason for this is not her motive but lack of certain other motives. Due to lack of some motives made the action in the above example bad or else it would have been good. This points out to the idea that many actions are morally bad even when their motives are not blameworthy.

Take the case of a thief. A boy steals Rs 500 from the purse of a rich woman. On being caught by the boy, he returns the Rs 500 to a woman. The boy says that due to lack of Rs 500 he is unable to consult the doctor because the doctor denies treating her without the payment. In this case, the boy's motive was to cure his mother and release her from pain, but this action is morally bad because he would gain something only by taking away someone else's property. He is not motivated by his knowledge that it harms the rich woman. Morality of an action is not only determined by its intention, but unintentional actions could also be blameworthy.

4. Knowledge or consciousness: Moral actions are done by an agent with knowledge or consciousness i.e. voluntariness as opposed to actions that are out of ignorance. Knowledge here pertains to knowledge of facts surrounding or

characterizing the situation, the choices available and also the possible consequences of the choices. For instance, a person unaware that her friend is allergic to onions serves her an onion cutlet. Had she known about her allergy, she could have served a cutlet with a different filling. Due to ignorance of his friend's medical state cancels out moral responsibility.

5. Constant struggle: How do we know that the action we perform is a moral one? Essentially, moral action is an action of moral value such that one's moral consciousness comes to work as one is called to make a moral response. Moral action is not a one-time but is an ongoing, continuous process. It can be said that by choosing the good, we become good.

By choosing to tell the truth, one becomes honest. However, honesty exhibited once does not make one honest to be such, one has to choose consistently to be honest. It may sound straightforward and formulaic, but actual moral action can be far more complex. Hence, becoming good, as the word "becoming" itself connotes, involves a constant struggle. Every action demands thinking, and decision-making and every moral action calls for rational deliberation and affirmation of our humanity.

Actions which proceed from natural programming of the body such as instinctive, thoughtless movements, mannerism, and reflex actions are not considered to be properly moral actions as they happen outside the control of the human agent. Likewise, any action is done by an individual out of honest ignorance hardly fits in the criteria of moral action. Moral actions are actions that proceed from the deliberate free will of human beings.

Philosophical views

The philosophical views on moral action are given through the different moral theories that are structured by different philosophers. The ultimate concern of a moral theory is to guide in making the decisions and judgments relating to various actions viz. moral or non-moral. Moral theories are broadly classified into three: Teleological theory, Deontological theory and Virtue theory. All these moral theories have presented their moral standards from different angles. Let us deliberate these theories with their respective principles of actions separately.

A. Teleological Theory

The word teleology is derived from the Greek word telos which means goal or purpose. Teleology is the study of goals, ends, and purposes. It locates moral

goodness in the consequence of our behavior and not the behavior itself. In other words, an action is morally right or good if the consequence of that action is more favorable than unfavorable.

According to teleological moral theory, all rational human actions are teleological in the sense that we reason about the means of achieving certain ends. For instance, the wrongness of telling a lie or intentionally harming someone depends on whether these actions produce good or bad results. A lie, if it prevents suffering might by consequentialists be the right thing to do. Moral behavior is goal-directed so from a teleological point of view, human behavior is neither right nor wrong in itself. Also, from the teleological perspective, motives really have nothing to do with rightness or wrongness of the act. What matters is what might happen as a consequence of those actions in any given context.

Teleological moral theories must somehow connect the consequences of human behavior to the foundational moral concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, and moral and immoral. The hallmark of most teleological moral theories is that they identify these moral concepts with pleasure and pain or happiness and unhappiness. Hence, moral actions are good, right, or moral in so far as they lead to pleasurable consequences and bad, wrong or immoral if they lead to the painful consequences. There are three types of teleological theories:

1. Ethical egoism- For this theory, an action is morally appropriate if the consequence of an action is more favorable than unfavorable only to the moral agent acting. Epicurus, Hobbes, Nietzsche, and Adam Smith are the advocates of this theory.

2. Ethical Altruism- an action is morally right if the consequences of an action are more favorable than unfavorable to everyone except the moral agent. Ethical altruism inspires an individual to sacrifice personal projects and dedicate themselves for the cause of others so that it will be treated as the most beneficent cause of an action.

3. Ethical Utilitarianism- an action is morally right if the consequences of the action are more favorable than unfavorable to everyone. Classical or Ethical Utilitarianism is one of the main theories brought under the rubric of teleological ethics. This is further broken into two main components- a theory of value and a theory of right action.

Firstly, it endorses Hedonism as a theory of value. Hedonism means happiness or pleasure as the supreme end of life. Secondly, it endorses consequentialism as a theory of right action. Jeremy Bentham and J.S Mill are the main exponents of this theory. They developed the position that it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that measures the rightness and wrongness of an act. Mill formulates the principle of utility that he regards as a fundamental moral principle. By principle of utility he means the principle which approves or disapproves of every action according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish happiness of the party whose interest is in question.

B. Deontological Theory

For deontologists a moral action is essentially about following a set of rules that forbid or require certain actions. These rules specify actions that are right or wrong about the rule in the question. The word deontology is derived from the Greek word deon and logos which means duty and study, so deontology is the study of duty. Deontological theorists hold that moral goodness has nothing to do with generating pleasure, happiness, and consequences. The wrongness of an action is intrinsic or resides in the kind of action that is rather than the consequences it brings about.

Deontologists equate right or wrong actions with obedience or disobedience to moral norms. Such moral norms are to be obeyed by each moral agent. In this sense, certain actions ought to be right even if they do not produce good consequences. Deontological theories are by definition duty-based. That is to say that morality consists in the fulfillment of moral obligations and duties.

Immanuel Kant's theory is perhaps the most well-known example of the deontological approach. For Kant, an action can have moral worth if and only if it is done from duty. His notion of acting from duty is in standard manner understood as doing what is right through the moral law. Whether a course of action is morally permissible will depend on whether or not it conforms to moral law i.e. Categorical Imperative.

Kant considered that the imperative should not be hypothetical, as it cannot be derived from the consideration of any end outside of the will of the individual. The categorical imperative has no reference to the external ends but in the right direction of the will itself. Human beings must have access to the moral truth to be responsible agents at all.

Kant argues that a moral action is one that is for the sake of the moral law. There is no particular content in the moral law so it cannot tell us what the matter or content of our actions ought to be but can only instruct us. For instance, we are obliged to keep our promises even when keeping them results in less good.

Kant believed that morality is based on pure practical reason. For him, the reason is what makes us capable of morality, to begin with. No conduct can be regarded as truly virtuous which rests on feeling but reason. Kant, unlike Mill, believed that certain types of actions (murder, theft, and lying) were prohibited even if it brings more happiness than the alternative.

C. Virtue Ethics

For Virtue ethicists, an action is moral or virtuous if it is performed through practical deliberation and not out of ignorance. Morality stems from the identity or character of the individual rather than being a reflection of the action of the individual. Aristotle has been the main source of inspiration of virtue ethics. He argued that the best life of a human is 'eudemonia' that involves the exercise of virtues or excellences. He says that there is nothing about having a life except the exercise of virtues.

Virtue ethics describes the character of a moral agent as a driving force for the ethical behavior rather than rules are argued by Kant. Virtue is the primary mode of evaluation as opposed to the act. Virtue is the habit or quality that allows the bearer to succeed at his or her or its purpose. The virtue of a knife, for example, is the sharpness and that of a racehorse is speed. Thus, to identify the virtues for human beings, one must have an account of what human purpose is. According to Aristotle, virtue is seen as a quality that leads to eudemonia or well-being. He categorized virtue as moral and intellectual.

A virtue ethicist would, however, focus less on lying in any particular instance and instead consider one's character and moral behavior, the decision to tell a lie or not to tell a lie. It refers to the collection of normative acts that emphasize being rather than doing. A virtue ethicists philosopher will identify virtues, desirable characteristics that the moral or virtuous person embodies.

Possessing these virtues is what makes one moral and one's actions are a mere reflection of one's inner morality. An action cannot be used as a demarcation of morality because a virtue encompasses more than just a simple selection of action. Instead, it is about the way of being that would cause the person exhibiting the virtue to make a certain virtuous choice consistently in each

situation. The agent by choosing to perform the virtuous action exhibits practical wisdom, knowledge of what he is doing and why it is good. This entails that the virtuous agent cannot act out of ignorance. Otherwise, he would not be genuinely choosing and would not be exhibiting practical wisdom.

Take for instance that there are two individuals Karb and Barb- Karb is a naturally good person who enjoys helping others-she isn't too bright, but her nature is such that she ends up helping people simply out of the kindness of heart. This kindness on his part is not cultivated; it is just a part of her personality, her basic nature. Barb, on the other hand, is also a kind of person but someone who has worked at it by developing good habits. She is good because she chose to be; she rationally and effectively endorsed virtue and set out on a path to be virtuous.

In Aristotle's view, Karb is someone who has natural goodness but no true virtue. Barb, on the other hand, has a genuine virtue because she has chosen virtue: she displayed practical wisdom. Karb has not and so her goodness in a way is accidental because it is operating by a kind of mindless instinct. For Aristotle, a virtuous person is a person who functions harmoniously- his desires and emotions do not conflict with what he knows to be right.

David Hume also wrote on virtue ethics. According to David Hume, the primary focus of moral evaluation is the internal states, the agent associated with virtue or having good character traits. He views virtues as mental qualities as pleasing: they are pleased because they are conducive to the social utility in some respect. Thus, he places no heavy psychological requirements on virtue. Having virtue means that one has a pleasing quality. The virtuous person does not need to have wisdom or intelligence, though they would count as intellectual virtues because they are pleasing and useful qualities. Hume's account does depend on a certain view of human nature. We are the sorts of creatures moved by feelings of sympathy for others, as well as concern for ourselves.

He believed that people are motivated by self-interest but that they are also motivated by love and sympathy for others. This sympathy forms the basis for morality. The pain of another is bad, and when I see this, I react sympathetically to the person. For instance, I would probably feel pity for a person if I see him being tortured.