Epitome of
Ethics,
Integrity
& Aptitude
for UPSC Civil Services
General Studies
Mains Paper IV

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CONTENTS

Ethics and Human Interface

A Note to Students

This is the first chapter in the syllabus which is largely in the nature of introduction to ethics. It is essential to develop ethical thinking both for individuals and the professionals working in organizations. The purpose of this chapter is to do develop the broad contours of the subject matter so that you may develop ethical thinking. Reading this chapter will help you handle general and broad questions on ethics. In civil services exams, questions based on this introductory lesson are often asked. However, the answer to those questions largely based on opinion should come from your inner vision rather than rote learning. A statement of a great personality or religious scriptures may be given, which you may be asked to comment on, explain, etc. You will do well in handling such questions, if you have developed your unique ethical vision. Remember, there is no right or wrong answers in questions asked from this chapter. The answers can be less convincing or more convincing or appealing. For instance, you may be asked to comment on the seven sins of Mahatma Gandhi or you may be asked to discuss the "means and ends" debate. In case you are expected to take a side, you must do it convincingly with logical pursuation. This chapter will give you many facts. At a certain stage it might get boring. You don't have to remember those facts but you may have to develop a broad understanding. The broad understanding here means, you should be able to answer what is ethics, what are the major ethical theories, in what ways these theories differ from one another and so on and so forth. Based on the questions that actually came in the previous exams given at the end of this chapter, you should try to develop concepts, understanding of ethical theories, concerns, etc., and also develop your personal views backed by conviction.

Here are some expected questions from this chapter. Take a look at these questions and come back again after reading the chapter. You will find you can easily handle these questions in your second attempt.

Expected Questions

1. What do you understand by values and ethics? What is the role of society in moulding the values of the individual?
2. Differentiate between Law and Ethics with suitable examples?

3. Identify a moral thinker/personality who has inspired you? Why have you been inspired by him?

4. Ethical statements should be supported by reason or do you think ethical statements are just an expression of emotion? Explain your views.

5. Ankit appears for an exam. He doesn't know the answers to most of the questions asked in the exam. His teacher, who is his relative comes forward to help him. What should Ankit do? Explain.

6. What do you understand by conscience? Give an example of conscience in your personal case and how it helped you? What did you learn from this experience.

7. Some people think means are important others think that ends are important. What is your opinion on the issue? Explain citing one ethical theory that prioritizes means over ends and one that gives priority to ends over means and justify.

8. ABC is a multinational pharmaceutical giant. In Africa a rare disease has affected a large number of children, who are dying a slow and painful death. ABC is trying to develop a vaccine against this disease. The vaccine is in the last stage of development and the ABC is already under pressure to develop the vaccine. The vaccine is awaiting the human trial which involves a lot of risk. The trial is to be conducted on a large population but the level of risk in this case is considerably higher than the risk in case of other drugs. The trial is likely to result in fatalities. ABC is secretly offering a much higher compensation to the volunteers; as a result many volunteers from an impoverished African country have come forward to participate in the human trials. The success of the trials will mean the end of virulence affecting a large number of poor African children who are dying and also the financial well being of thousands of impoverished Africans.

   What are the ethics involved in the case above? Should the company go for the human trial or resist from this approach. What is your opinion on this issue? Explain.

9. Why do you think ethics is important in human life? Explain with examples.

10. Do values change over time? What do you understand by universal values?

Introduction

The broad topic of "Ethics and Human Interface" followed by "Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions" may give us some idea on the broad area that covers nearly everything in Ethics. Essence means 'intrinsic' or indispensable quality. In other words, we need to explore the intrinsic quality of ethics, that is, the meaning and definition of ethics and how it is different from morality and other similar concepts. Secondly, we also need to understand that the subject matter of ethics has human

context. We can discuss ethics only in context of human actions. That is to say our actions are determined in an ethical background and our actions have ethical consequences.

Let us try to understand the essence of ethics. According to Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, "Ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct". This could then be taken not only as the essence of ethics but also as the broadest definition of ethics.

What is Ethics?

Rushworth Kidder (2003) in *How Good People Make Tough Choices* 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". 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." Paul and Elder state that most people confuse ethics with behaving in accordance with social conventions, religious beliefs and the law and don't treat ethics as a stand-alone concept.

In its simplest version, ethics may be understood as a system of moral principles that determine how people lead their life and make decisions.

Ethics is also described as moral philosophy. It is concerned with what is good for individual and society. This is why the syllabus setters have named the topic "Ethics and Human Interface".

The word 'ethics' can mean several things. While many people treat 'ethics' the same as 'morality', the students who study "Ethics" as a part of their curriculum in Philosophy know the difference quite well. However, for most of us there is always an ambiguity when we talk about Morals and Ethics because their difference is subtle; as you would have noticed above, even Encyclopaedia of Philosophy treats morals and ethics as one in their broadest form, but you should also note that the encyclopaedia of Philosophy clubs moral philosophy and ethics together, not ethics and moral together. Perhaps, these two define the personality, attitude and behaviour of a person. The word Morals is derived from a Greek word "Mos" which means custom. On the other hand, Ethics is derived from another Greek word "Ethios" which means character. Now let's learn the difference between Morals and Ethics.

Ethics and Morality

As laymen we often use ethics and morality interchangeably. However, academicians and theologians often make a difference. Both morality and

ethics often deal with the same issues, that is, the difference between good and bad or right and wrong.

A major difference, however, is that morality in the opinion of many experts is personal and normative, while ethics as the standard of good or bad applies to community or a social setting.

Here's an example: You are ethical when both you and your community think adultery is immoral. However, when you think adultery as immoral at your personal level but your local community has no strong feelings against adultery, you are unethical.

Morality has a Christian or theological connotation as moral theology is prominent in church but ethics is used and discussed in medicine, law, business, administration and other fields.

Nevertheless, today the ethicists use the two terms synonymously and interchangeably.

Comparison Chart: Morals and Ethics

Basis for Comparison	Morals	Ethics
Meaning	Morals are the beliefs of the individual or group as to what is right or wrong.	Ethics are the guiding principles which help the individual or group to decide what is good or bad.
Governed By	Social and cultural norms	Individual or Legal and Professional norms
Applicability in Business	No	Yes
Consistency	Morals may differ from society to society and culture to culture.	Ethics are generally uniform.
Expression	Morals are expressed in the form of general rules and statements.	Ethics are abstract.
Freedom to think and choose	No	Yes

Importance of Ethics in Human Life
This also brings out the importance of ethics in human life. Ethics is the basic necessity to lead an organized and civilized life as ethics can help us choose a course of action in human interaction. In the absence of an ethical background to our actions, there would be no difference between actions of animals and human beings.

Since ethics explains why we behave in a well defined and accepted manner in society, we can say that ethics is the standard that guides human goals and values.

Ethics is a requirement for human life. It is our means of deciding a course of action. Without it, our actions would be random and aimless. There would be no way to work towards a goal because there would be no way to pick between a limitless number of goals. Even with an ethical standard, we may be unable to pursue our goals with the possibility of success. To the degree which a rational ethical standard is taken, we are able to correctly organize our goals and actions to accomplish our most important values. Any flaw in our ethics will reduce our ability to be successful in our endeavours.

A proper foundation of ethics requires a standard of value to which all goals and actions can be compared. This standard is our own lives, and the happiness which makes them livable. This is our ultimate standard of value, the goal for which an ethical man must always aim. It is arrived at by an examination of man's nature, and recognizing his peculiar needs. A system of ethics must further consist of not only emergency situations, but the day to day choices we make constantly. It must include our relations to others, and recognize their importance not only to our physical survival, but to our well-being and happiness. It must recognize that our lives are an end in themselves, and that sacrifice is not only not necessary, but destructive.

Essence, Determinants, and Consequences of Ethics

Few Ethical Questions to Understand the Essence of Ethics

Let us begin with a few ethical questions. Do murderers because of their action deserve death penalty? Is executing murderers morally justified because it will likely have more good consequences for society than sentencing them to life in prison?

A pregnant woman who drinks alcoholic beverages while pregnant stands the risk that her baby will be born with hearing and vision problems, motor skill problems, language use problems, or memory or attention problems. Is it morally permissible – is it ethically right for a pregnant woman to drink alcohol? We need some way to assess the importance of the risks involved?

How would we begin to answer ethical questions like these? Are there ethical standards we can use to help us answer ethical questions? If so where do these ethical standards come from? Do they come from society? Do they come from God or religion? Are they in some way derived from rationality and logic? Perhaps ethical standards are derived from human nature that has been designed by God. Or may be ethical standards sprang from our human nature that has been shaped by millions of years of evolution.

Each of these questions about ethical standards is closely related, yet slightly different. One way to sum up what they all have in common is to say that they are concerned with the origins of ethics. It may be noted that people have attempted to formulate and support answers to these philosophical questions about ethics for many centuries. Philosophers, in addition to thinking about these questions and formulating answers to them are known for their skills in grouping questions together as a first step in organizing our thoughts on these issues. We can describe the above set of cluster questions as the philosophical problem of the origin of ethics. Solving the problem and fully answering the questions would involve providing a well developed account of where ethical standards came from.

Determinants and Consequences of Ethics

Let us understand determinants and consequences of ethics. Our ordinary day to day life is complex which is obvious yet overlooked. And when we do catch an unusually full glimpse of one facet, we are apt to seize upon it, track down its relation to several of life's other facets, and then ignore other equally obvious dimensions of our experience.
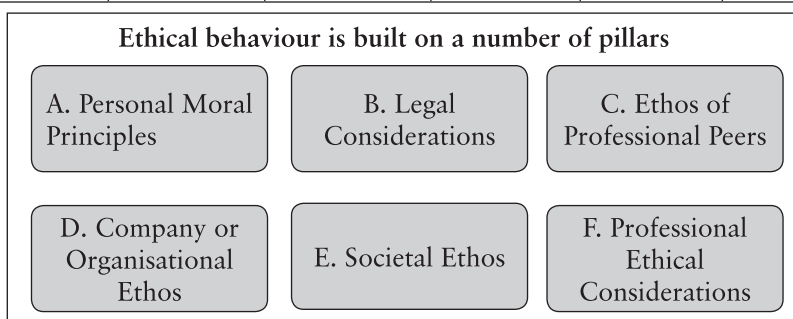
Because our discussion about right and wrong inevitably requires attention to the external, perceptible actions and their attendant circumstances, it requires s special effort to keep an eye on all of the essential but distinct aspects of our moral activities. A case many be helpful here.

Imagine you have a brother who is addicted to gambling. You have given him money many times in the past when he desperately needed it and each time you extracted a promise from him that he would never gamble again. Now for what seems to be like hundredth time, he calls and tells you that unless you can help him payoff a gambling debt of Rs.50,000, he will be in trouble from his opponents or could even meet a worse fate.

In this case, the determinants of your behaviour will be guided by three factors: Your conscience (what you finally believe deep down is the right thing for you to do), your decision (actually making up your mind for what you will do), the external behaviour (putting your decision to effect). To these three factors, you may add motive or motives. You can make a distinction between consequences and motives. Failure to clearly differentiate the two has again and again the worst kind of muddles.

The determinants of ethical behaviour can be represented as under:

Factors influencing ethical behaviours					
Family influences (esp. early childhood)	Personal Conscience	Friends/ Acquaintances	Desire for money/ power/ influence	Political views	Religious beliefs
School/ Education	Desire to preserve/ enhance status	Loyalty to Family/Friends/ Company	Company Ethos	Professional Ethics	...
Cultural/ societal values	Media influences/ coverage	Legal constraints (Government)	Enforcement (Legal/ Professional/ Religious)	...	...

Ethical behaviour is built on a number of pillars

A. Personal Moral Principles

B. Legal Considerations

C. Ethos of Professional Peers

D. Company or Organisational Ethos

E. Societal Ethos

F. Professional Ethical Considerations

It is not difficult to see that there are a number of factors that influence ethical behaviour or there are a number of determinants of ethical behaviour.

Some text books have attempted to summarize these factors but it is nearly impossible to do so. All you need to remember is that these factors are both external and internal. The internal factors include conscience, education, morals and upbringing, while the external factors include your family, society, organization, nation and its legal system.

A more appropriate and focused question here can be why a manager behaves unethically or why an administrator behaves unethically.

There could be several reasons why a manager/administrator behaves unethically. For instance, bribery could be culturally acceptable. Here's is an example: The German engineering company Siemens was once involved in a huge scandal. The company was accused of attempting to bribe an official when operating overseas. The manager of the company did not see it as an aberration because paying bribe to win a contract was a normal practice in the country of the origin of this company. A separate fund was allocated under this head which was also audited. However, in the country where Siemens did the business (USA), it was unacceptable.

Of course culture is a strong factor for unethical conduct, which may include the culture of upbringing. For instance, you are brought up in a rural or semi-rural area. Here, if you need a house, you tell your friends that you need a house and you get the house for which you do not have to pay your broker. Now you shift to a city and one of your friends is a broker there. He arranges a house for you. Your friend asks for a commission and you are probably shocked. But your friend is equally ethical.

Another important factor that determines ethical behaviour is the legal factor. It restraints and defines what an ethical or moral behaviour is. Similarly your family and school are the other influences in addition to factors like the organization you work for and its culture.

Determinants of ethical behaviour and of unethical behaviour in business:
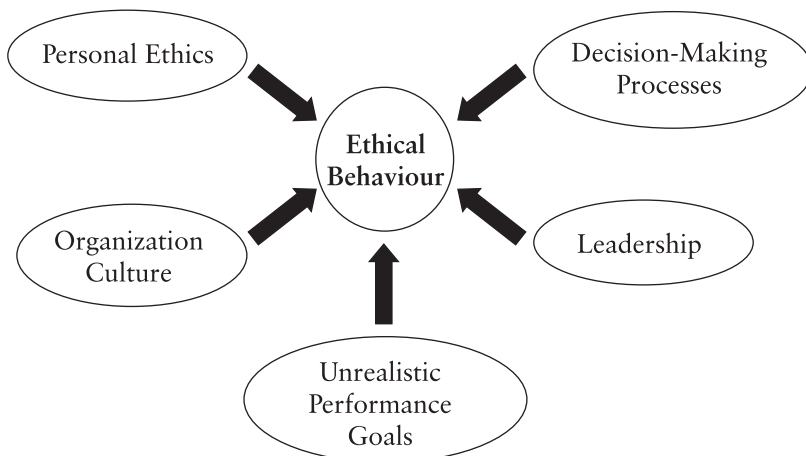
Several studies of unethical behaviour in business have come to the conclusion that business people sometimes do not realize they are behaving unethically primarily because they fail to ask, "Is this decision or action ethical?" It is often the result of applying straightforward business calculation to a decision without considering important ethical implications. In addition, the climate in some businesses does not encourage people thinking through the ethical consequences of business decisions.

Result of an organizational culture that deemphasizes business ethics, reducing all decisions to be purely economic:

Unrealistic Performance Expectations can cause unethical decisions such as pressure from the parent company to meet unrealistic goals that can only be attained by cutting corners or acting in an unethical manner. This often results in managers violating their own personal ethics and engaging in unethical behaviour. On the other hand, an organizational culture with values that reinforce ethical behaviour is an essential ethical component.

Consequences in Ethics

By this phrase we may mean everything that happens as a consequence of any particular external action or as a consequence of any particular omission or failure to do some action. Consequences are in a sense almost infinite. Ordinarily, we take a very simple stance when discussing the consequences of an action. With respect to the case of one's gambling brother, we would probably think only of the simple alternatives: the consequences of loaning him the money would be to ensure his well being whereas the consequences of refusing the money would be his suffering assault or worse.

In ethics, there are consequentialist schools like Utilitarians for whom the consequences determine the ethicality of an action.

The consequences are the effects caused by an action and the quality of these consequences depend on how much good they contain. Motives are the causes and the consequences are the effect. The consequences are defined by various theories, one of which is utilitarianism. Utilitarianism evaluates consequences by how much happiness and suffering they contain.
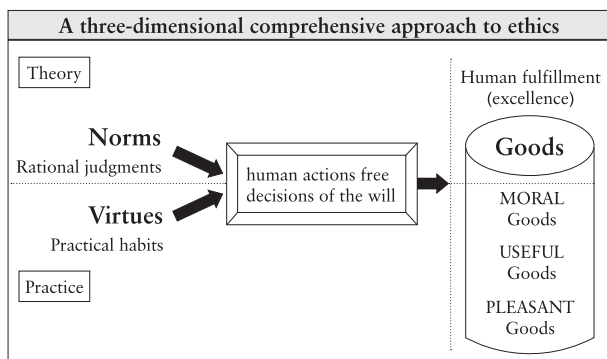
The consequence that mattered to every human is pleasure and happiness in the absence of pain and suffering. The good consequences are defined in terms of happiness and suffering. The amount of pleasure and pain created by an action is really a good way of showing that some consequences are better or worse than others. Jeremy Bentham, a utilitarian described the consequences based on the actions.

Dimensions of Ethics

Ethics is today nearly an absolute necessity in almost every human enterprise. In other words, the dimension of ethics can be really wide. Nevertheless, dimensions of ethics have been interpreted in different ways primarily because it has often been confused with the scope of ethics. Dimension here means a frame work to explain ethics and ethical theories.
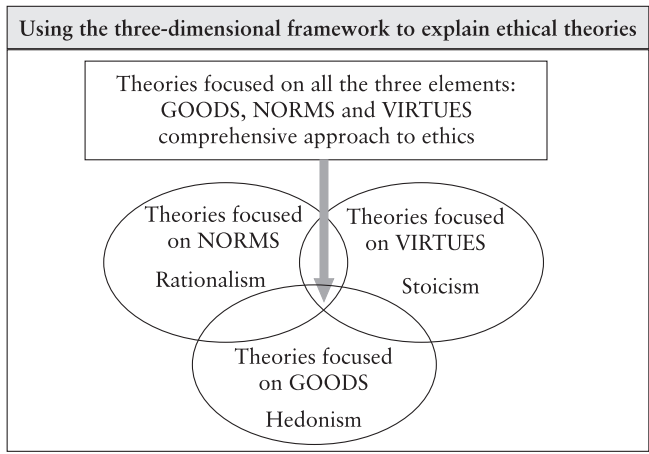
Some experts have recommended three ethical dimensions: **norms**, **goods**, and **virtues**.

Moral norms, goods and virtues are indeed interrelated and rooted in human nature if one accepts the basic anthropological and ethical concepts presented by Aristotle and his main commentator, Thomas Aquinas (MacIntyre, 1993). The attainment of goods (useful, pleasant and honest or moral) is the purpose of our actions. Moral good is known by reason and the knowledge of good leads to moral norms as means that will help to attain the good. But this good cannot be achieved without the work of the will. In our effort to reach the good, we develop moral virtues, habits of conduct that will help us to achieve our purpose. Because human virtues are habits, they provide promptness or readiness to do 'good'; ease or facility in performing a good action: and joy or satisfaction while doing it. Good produces attraction, and norms and virtues make easier its achievement.

A three-dimensional comprehensive approach to ethics

Theory

Norms

Rational judgments

human actions free
decisions of the will

Virtues

Practical habits

Practice

Human fulfillment
(excellence)

Goods

MORAL
Goods

USEFUL
Goods

PLEASANT
Goods

The three elements, goods, norms and virtues are interconnected and they need each other to be properly understood. Each one is important and necessary in order to understand ethics as human fulfillment. Understanding norms, goods and virtues in this way is, by definition, interrelated (Polo, 1996). Furthermore, the three elements: rules (norms), goods and virtues "have to be understood in their relationship or not at all"; and "rules, conceived apart from virtues and goods, are not the same as rules conceived in dependence upon virtues and goods; and so it is also with virtues apart from rules and good and good apart from rules and virtues." (MacIntyre, 1993, p. 144).

From the three elements – goods, norms, and virtues – emerge the ethical theories.

Using the three-dimensional framework to explain ethical theories

Theories focused on all the three elements:
GOODS, NORMS and VIRTUES
comprehensive approach to ethics

Theories focused
on NORMS

Rationalism

Theories focused
on VIRTUES

Stoicism

Theories focused
on GOODS

Hedonism

Hedonism

If we consider the one-dimension approaches, those theories that mainly focus on just one of the three dimensions, then we can describe three main theories. The first one is Hedonism, the ethical theory that considers pleasure as the only thing that is good for a person. This is often used as a justification

for evaluating actions in terms of how much pleasure and how little pain it causes. In this sense, it is an ethical approach that focuses mainly on goods (pleasant), but forgetting the basic role of norms and virtues.

Utilitarianism

A modern version of Hedonism is Utilitarianism (Sen, 1979). Some followers of this approach understand that all human action should be directed toward achieving the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. While hedonistic doctrines propose doing whatever makes an individual happiest (over the long run), this perspective promotes actions which should make everyone happy (Hospers, 1979; Fontrodona, 1987). But, in both approaches there is an important limitation, they misapprehend moral goods, or at least they confuse them with pleasant goods and useful goods respectively. At the same time, moral norms are obviated or just reduced to the logic of pleasure and utility, which seems a clear act of intellectual and philosophical abdication (Smart, 1956). And that leads to the renouncement to moral virtues.

Stoicism

Another one-dimension approach to ethics is Stoicism, the ethical theory that focuses on virtues. The core doctrine of this theory is that virtue, understood as the maintenance of a will that is in accord with nature, is the sole good. Stoicism teaches the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive emotions. But there is no mention of moral good or norm other than the harmony within the universe, over which one has no direct control. Without the reference to a good where human action is oriented, virtues are perplexed and they become the only goal in life (Finnis 1983).

Rationalism

A third one-dimension approach to ethics is rationalism, the ethical theory that focuses mainly on norms. Moral rationalism is that in which the criterion of the truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive, and it has its main exponent in Emmanuel Kant (Llano, 2002). He tried to convert our everyday, obvious, rational knowledge of morality into philosophical knowledge. He followed a method of using "practical reason" to reach conclusions which can be applied to the world of experience. Kant is known for his theory that there is a single moral obligation, which he called the "Categorical Imperative", and is derived from the concept of duty. Kant defines the demands of the moral law as "categorical imperatives", those principles that are intrinsically valid and good. Those moral norms must be obeyed in all situations and circumstances if our behaviour is to observe the moral law. It is from the Categorical Imperative that all other moral obligations are generated, and by which all moral obligations can be tested.

But a position that overemphasises norms, with no reference to other moral good or virtue, could become inhuman and ethically insufficient. When the only guide of moral conduct is a fix norm, without reference to human development, such norm will become just a regulation (Polo, 1996, 121). Together with one-dimension approaches there are Intermediate approaches that consider just two dimensions of ethics. It would be the case of modern approaches such as consequentialism (Anscombe 1958, 1981) and the, so called, theory of justice ethics (Rawls, 1971, 1975 and Rorty 1991), which consider moral norms and, in some sense, the moral goods, but forget the role of virtue.

Dimension and Scope of Ethics

Ethics (or Moral Philosophy) is concerned with questions of how people ought to act, and the search for a definition of right conduct (identified as the one causing the greatest good) and the good life (in the sense of a life worth living or a life that is satisfying or happy).

The word "Ethics" is derived from the Greek "ethos" (meaning "custom" or "habit"). Ethics differs from morals and morality in that Ethics denotes the theory of right action and the greater good, while morals indicate their practice. Ethics is not limited to specific acts and defined moral codes, but encompasses the whole of moral ideals and behaviours, a pErson's philosophy of life (or Weltanschauung).

It asks questions like "How should people act?" (Normative or Prescriptive Ethics), "What do people think is right?" (Descriptive Ethics), "How do we take moral knowledge and put it into practice?" (Applied Ethics), and "What does 'right' Even mean?" (Meta-Ethics). See below for more discussion of these categories.

Ancient Greek Ethics

Socrates, as recorded in Plato's dialogues, is customarily regarded as the father of Western ethics. He asserted that people will naturally do what is good provided that they know what is right, and that evil or bad actions are purely the result of ignorance: "There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance".

He equated knowledge and wisdom with self-awareness (meaning to be aware of every fact relevant to a person's existence) and virtue and happiness. So, in essence, he considered self-knowledge and self-awareness to be the essential good, because the truly wise (i.e. self-aware) person will know what is right, do what is good, and therefore be happy.

According to Aristotle, "Nature does nothing in vain", so it is only when a person acts in accordance with their nature and thereby realizes their full potential, that they will do good and therefore be content in life. He held that self-realization (the awareness of one's nature and the development of

one's talents) is the surest path to happiness, which is the ultimate goal; all other things (such as civic life or wealth) being merely means to an end. He encouraged moderation in all things, the extremes being degraded and immoral, (e.g. courage is the moderate virtue between the extremes of cowardice and recklessness), and held that Man should not simply live, but live well with conduct governed by moderate virtue. Virtue, for Aristotle, denotes doing the right thing to the right person at the right time to the proper extent in the correct fashion and for the right reason - something of a tall order.

Cynicism is an ancient doctrine best exemplified by the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, who lived in a tub on the streets of Athens. He taught that a life lived according to Nature was better than one that confirmed to convention, and that a simple life is essential to virtue and happiness. As a moral teacher, Diogenes emphasized detachment from many of those things conventionally considered "good".

Hedonism posits that the principal ethic is maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. This may range from those advocating self-gratification regardless of the pain and expense to others and with no thought for the future (Cyrenaic Hedonism), to those who believe that the most ethical pursuit maximizes pleasure and happiness for the most people. Somewhere in the middle of this continuum, Epicureanism observed that indiscriminate indulgence sometimes results in negative consequences, such as pain and fear, which are to be avoided.

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus posited that the greatest good was contentment, serenity and peace of mind, which can be achieved by self-mastery over one's desires and emotions, and freedom from material attachments. In particular, sex and sexual desire are to be avoided as the greatest threat to the integrity and equilibrium of a man's mind. According to Epictetus, difficult problems in life should not be avoided, but rather embraced as spiritual exercises needed for the health of the spirit.

Pyrrho, the founding figure of Pyrrhonian Skepticism, taught that one cannot rationally decide between what is good and what is bad although, generally speaking, self-interest is the primary motive of human behaviour, and he was disinclined to rely upon sincerity, virtue or Altruism as motivations.

Humanism, with its emphasis on the dignity and worth of all people and their ability to determine right and wrong purely by appeal to universal human qualities (especially rationality), can be traced back to Thales, Xenophanes of Colophon (570 - 480 B.C.), Anaxagoras, Pericles (c. 495 - 429 B.C.), Protagoras, Democritus and the historian Thucydides (c. 460 - 375 B.C.). These early Greek thinkers were all instrumental in the moving away from a spiritual morality based on the supernatural, and development of a more humanistic freethought (the view that beliefs should be formed on the basis

of science and logic, and not be influenced by emotion, authority, tradition or dogma).

Normative Ethics

Normative Ethics (or Prescriptive Ethics) is the branch of ethics concerned with establishing how things should or ought to be, how to value them, which things are good or bad, and which actions are right or wrong. It attempts to develop a set of rules governing human conduct, or a set of norms for action. Normative ethical theories are usually split into three main categories: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics.

Consequentialism (or Teleological Ethics)

It argues that the morality of an action is contingent on the action's outcome or result. Thus, a morally right action is one that produces a good outcome or consequence. Consequentialist theories must consider questions like "What sort of consequences count as good consequences?", "Who is the primary beneficiary of moral action?", "How are the consequences judged and who judges them?"

Some consequentialist theories include:

Utilitarianism, which holds that an action is right if it leads to the highest happiness for the greatest number of people ("happiness" here is defined as the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain). The origins of Utilitarianism can be traced back as far as the Greek philosopher Epicurus, but its full formulation is usually credited to Jeremy Betham, with John Stuart Mill as its foremost proponent.

Hedonism, which is the philosophy that pleasure is the most important pursuit of mankind, and that individuals should strive to maximise their own total pleasure (not of any pain or suffering). Epicureanism is a more moderate approach (which still seeks to maximize happiness, but which defines happiness more as a state of tranquillity than pleasure).

Egoism, which holds that an action is right if it maximizes good for the self. Thus, Egoism may license actions which are good for individual, but detrimental to the general welfare. Individual Egoism holds that all people should do whatever benefits him. Personal Egoism holds that he should act in his own self-interest, but makes no claims about what anyone else ought to do. Universal Egoism holds that everyone should act in ways that are in their own interest.

Asceticism, which is, in some ways, the opposite of Egoism in that it describes a life characterized by abstinence from egoistic pleasures especially to achieve a spiritual goal.

Altruism, which prescribes that an individual take actions that have the best consequences for everyone except for himself, according to Auguste Comte's

dictum, "Live for others". Thus, individuals have a moral obligation to help, serve or benefit others, if necessary at the sacrifice of self-interest.

Rule Consequentialism, which is a theory (sometimes seen as an attempt to reconcile Consequentialism and Deontology), that moral behaviour involves following certain rules, but that those rules should be chosen based on the consequences that the selection of those rules will have.

Negative Consequentialism, which focuses on minimizing bad consequences rather than promoting good consequences. This may actually require active intervention (to prevent harm from being done), or may only require passive avoidance of bad outcomes.

Deontology

Deontology is an approach to ethics that focuses on the rightness or wrongness of actions themselves, as opposed to the rightness or wrongness of the consequences of those actions. It argues that decisions should be made considering the factors of one's duties and other's rights (the Greek 'deon' means 'obligation' or 'duty').

Some deontological theories include:

Divine Command Theory: a form of deontological theory which states that an action is right if God has decreed that it is right, and that an act is obligatory if and only if (and because) it is commanded by God. Thus, moral obligations arise from God's commands, and the rightness of any action depends upon that action being performed because it is a duty, not because of any good consequences arising from that action. William of Ockham, René Descartes and the 18th Century Calvinists all accepted versions of this moral theory.

Natural Rights Theory (such as that espoused by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke), which holds that humans have absolute, natural rights (in the sense of universal rights that are inherent in the nature of ethics, and not contingent on human actions or beliefs). This eventually developed into what we today call human rights.

Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, which roots morality in humanity's rational capacity and asserts certain inviolable moral laws. Kant's formulation is deontological in that he argues that to act in the morally right way, people must act according to duty, and that it is the motives of the person who carries out the action that make them right or wrong, not the consequences of the actions. Simply stated, the Categorical Imperative states that one should only act in such a way that one could want the maxim (or motivating principle) of one's action to become a universal law, and that one should always treat people as an end as well as a means to an end.

Pluralistic Deontology is a description of the deontological ethics propounded by W.D. Ross (1877 - 1971). He argues that there are seven prima facie duties which need to be taken into consideration when deciding which

duty should be acted upon: beneficence (to help other people to increase their pleasure, improve their character, etc); non-maleficence (to avoid harming other people); justice (to ensure people get what they deserve); self-improvement (to improve ourselves); reparation (to recompense someone if you have acted wrongly towards them); gratitude (to benefit people who have benefited us); and, promise-keeping (to act according to explicit and implicit promises, including the implicit promise to tell the truth). In some circumstances, there may be clashes or conflicts between these duties and a decision must be made whereby one duty may "trump" another, although there are no hard and fast rules and no fixed order of significance.

Contractarian Ethics (or the Moral Theory of Contractarianism) claims that moral norms derive their normative force from the idea of contract or mutual agreement. It holds that moral acts are those that we would all agree to if we were unbiased, and that moral rules themselves are a sort of a contract, and therefore only people who understand and agree to the terms of the contract are bound by it. The theory stems initially from political Contractarianism and the principle of social contract developed by Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, which essentially holds that people give up some rights to a government and/or other authority in order to receive, or jointly preserve, social order. Contractualism is a variation on Contractarianism, although based more on the Kantian ideas that ethics is an essentially interpersonal matter, and that right and wrong are a matter of whether we can justify the action to other people.

Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics, focuses on the inherent character of a person rather than on the nature or consequences of specific actions performed. The system identifies virtues (those habits and behaviours that will allow a person to achieve"eudaimonia", or well being or a good life), counsels practical wisdom to resolve any conflicts between virtues, and claims that a lifetime of practising these virtues leads to, or in effect constitutes, happiness and the good life.

Eudaimonism is a philosophy originated by Aristotle that defines right action as that which leads to "well being", and which can be achieved by a lifetime of practising the virtues in one's everyday activities, subject to the exercise of practical wisdom. It was first advocated by Plato and is particularly associated with Aristotle, and became the prevailing approach to ethical thinking in the Ancient and Medieval periods. It fell out of favour in the Early Modern period, but has recently undergone a modern resurgence.

Agent-Based Theories give an account of virtue based on our common-sense intuitions about which character traits are admirable (e.g. benevolence, kindness, compassion, etc), which we can identify by looking at the people we admire, our moral exemplars.

Ethics of Care was developed mainly by Feminist writers, and calls for a change in how we view morality and the virtues, shifting towards the more

marginalized virtues exemplified by women, such as taking care of others, patience, the ability to nurture, self-sacrifice, etc.

Meta-Ethics

Meta-Ethics is concerned primarily with the meaning of ethical judgements, and seeks to understand the nature of ethical properties, statements, attitudes, and judgements and how they may be supported or defended. A meta-ethical theory, unlike a normative ethical theory, does not attempt to evaluate specific choices as being better, worse, good, bad or evil; rather it tries to define the essential meaning and nature of the problem being discussed. It concerns itself with second order questions, specifically the semantics, epistemology and ontology of ethics.

The major meta-ethical views are commonly divided into two camps: Moral Realism and Moral Anti-Realism

Moral Realism: Moral Realism (or Moral Objectivism) holds that there are objective moral values, so that evaluative statements are essentially factual claims, which are either true or false, and that their truth or falsity are independent of our beliefs, feelings or other attitudes towards the things being evaluated. It is a cognitivist view in that it holds that ethical sentences express valid propositions and are therefore truth-apt.

There are two main variants:

Ethical Naturalism: This doctrine holds that there are objective moral properties of which we have empirical knowledge, but that these properties are reducible to entirely non-ethical properties. It assumes cognitivism (the view that ethical sentences express propositions and can therefore be true or false), and that the meanings of these ethical sentences can be expressed as natural properties without the use of ethical terms.

Ethical Non-Naturalism: This doctrine (whose major apologist is G. E. Moore) holds that ethical statements express propositions (in that sense it is also cognitivist) that cannot be reduced to non-ethical statements (e.g. "goodness" is indefinable in that it cannot be defined in any other terms). Moore claimed that a naturalistic fallacy is committed by any attempt to prove a claim about ethics by appealing to a definition in terms of one or more natural properties (e.g. "good" cannot be defined interms of "pleasant", "more evolved", "desired", etc).

Ethical Intuitionism is a variant of Ethical Non-Naturalism which claims that we sometimes have intuitive awareness of moral properties or of moral truths.

Moral Anti-Realism: Moral Anti-Realism holds that there are no objective moral values, and comes in one of three forms, depending on whether ethical statements are believed to be subjective claims (Ethical Subjectivism), not genuine claims at all (Non-Cognitivism) or mistaken objective claims (Moral Nihilism, Moral Skepticism):

Ethical Subjectivism: which holds that there are no objective moral properties and that moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes and/or conventions of the observers, or that any ethical sentence merely implies an attitude, opinion, personal preference or feeling held by someone. There are several different variants:

- *Simple Subjectivism*: the view that ethical statements reflect sentiments, personal preferences and feelings rather than objective facts.

- *Individualist subjectivism*: the view (originally put forward by Protagoras) that there are as many distinct scales of good and evil as there are individuals in the world (effectively a form of Egoism).

- *Moral Relativism (or Ethical Relativism)*: the view that for a thing to be morally right is for it to be approved of by society, leading to the conclusion that different things are right for people in different societies and different periods in history.

- *Ideal Observer Theory*: the view that what is right is determined by the attitudes that a hypothetical ideal observer (a being who is perfectly rational, imaginative and informed) would have.

- **Non-Cognitivism,** which holds that ethical sentences are neither true nor false because they do not express genuine propositions, thus implying that moral knowledge is impossible. Again there are different versions:

- *Emotivism*: the view, defended by A.J. Ayer and C. L. Stevenson (1908 - 1979) among others, that ethical sentences serve merely to express emotions, and ethical judgements are primarily expressions of one's own attitude, although to some extent they are also imperatives meant to change the attitudes and actions of other listeners.

- *Prescriptivism (or Universal Prescriptivism)*: the view, propounded by R.M. Hare (1919 - 2002), that moral statements function as imperatives which are universalizable (i.e. applicable to everyone in similar circumstances) e.g. "Killing is wrong" really means "Do not kill!"

- *Expressivism*: the view that the primary function of moral sentences is not to assert any matter of fact, but rather to express an evaluative attitude toward an object of evaluation. Therefore, because the function of moral language is non-descriptive, moral sentences do not have any truth conditions.

- *Quasi-Realism*: the view, developed from Expressivism and defended by Simon Blackburn (1944 -), that ethical statements behave linguistically like factual claims, and can be appropriately called "true" or "false" even though there are no ethical facts for them to correspond to. Blackburn argues that ethics cannot be entirely realist, for this would not allow for phenomena such as the gradual development of ethical positions over time or in differing cultural traditions.

- *Projectivism*: the view that qualities can be attributed to (or "projected" on) an object as if those qualities actually belong to it. Projectivism in Ethics (originally proposed by David Hume and more recently championed by Simon Blackburn) is associated by many with Moral Relativism, and is considered controversial, even though it was philosophical orthodoxy throughout much of the 20th Century.

- *Moral Fictionalism*: the view that moral statements should not be taken to be literally true, but merely a useful fiction. This has led to charges of individuals claiming to hold attitudes that they do not really have, and therefore are in some way insincere.

Moral Nihilism: which holds that ethical claims are generally false. It holds that there are no objective values (that nothing is morally good, bad, wrong, right, etc.) because there are no moral truths (e.g. a moral nihilist would say that murder is not wrong, but neither is it right).

Error Theory is a form of Moral Nihilism which combines Cognitivism (the belief that moral language consists oftruth-apt statements) with Moral Nihilism (the belief that there are no moral facts).

Moral Skepticism, which holds that no one has any moral knowledge (or the stronger claim that no one can have any moral knowledge). It is particularly opposed to Moral Realism (see above) and perhaps its most famous proponent is Friedrich Nietzsche.

An alternative division of meta-ethical views is into:

- **Moral Absolutism:** the ethical belief that there are absolute standards against which moral questions can be judged, and that certain actions are right or wrong, regardless of the context of the act.

- **Moral Universalism:** the meta-ethical position that there is a universal ethic which applies all the time to all people, regardless of culture, race, sex, religion, nationality, sexuality or other distinguishing feature.

- **Moral Relativism:** the position that moral or ethical propositions do not reflect objective and/or universal moral truths, but instead make claims relative to social, cultural, historical or personal circumstances.

Descriptive Ethics

Descriptive Ethics is a value-free approach to ethics which examines ethics from the perspective of observations of actual choices made by moral agents in practice. It is the study of people's beliefs about morality, and implies the existence of, rather than explicitly prescribing, theories of value or of conduct. It is not designed to provide guidance to people in making moral decisions, nor is it designed to evaluate the reasonableness of moral norms.

It is more likely to be investigated by those working in the fields of evolutionary biology, psychology, sociology, history or anthropology, although information that comes from descriptive ethics is also used in philosophical arguments.

Descriptive Ethics is sometimes referred to as Comparative Ethics because much activity can involve comparing ethical systems: comparing the ethics of the past to the present; comparing the ethics of one society to another; and comparing the ethics which people claim to follow with the actual rules of conduct which describe their actions.

Applied Ethics

Applied Ethics is a discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply ethical theory to real-life situations. Strict, principle-based ethical approaches often result in solutions to specific problems that are not universally acceptable or impossible to implement. Applied Ethics is much more ready to include the insights of psychology, sociology and other relevant areas of knowledge in its deliberations. It is used in determining public policy.

The following would be questions of Applied Ethics: "Is getting an abortion immoral?", "Is euthanasia immoral?", "Is affirmative action right or wrong?", "What are human rights, and how do we determine them?" and "Do animals have rights as well?"

Some topics falling within the discipline include:

- **Medical Ethics:** the study of moral values and judgements as they apply to medicine. Historically, Western medical ethics may be traced to guidelines on the duty of physicians in antiquity, such as the Hippocratic Oath (at its simplest, "to practice and prescribe to the best of my ability for the good of my patients, and to try to avoid harming them"), and early Rabbinic, Muslim and Christian teachings. Six of the values that commonly apply to medical ethics discussions are: Beneficence (a practitioner should act in the best interest of the patient, Non-maleficence ("first, do no harm"), Autonomy (the patient has the right to refuse or choose their treatment), Justice (concerning the distribution of scarce health resources, and the decision of who gets what treatment), Dignity (both the patient and the practitioner have the right to dignity), Honesty (truthfulness and respect for the concept of informed consent).

- **Bioethics:** concerns the ethical controversies brought about by advances in biology and medicine. Public attention was drawn to these questions by abuses of human subjects in biomedical experiments, especially during the Second World War, but with recent advances in bio-technology, bioethics has become a fast-growing academic and professional area of inquiry. Issues include consideration of cloning,

stem cell research, transplant trade, genetically modified food, human genetic engineering, genomics, infertility treatment, etc.

- **Legal Ethics:** an ethical code governing the conduct of people engaged in the practice of law. Model rules usually address the client-lawyer relationship, duties of a lawyer as advocate in adversary proceedings, dealings with persons other than clients, law firms and associations, public service, advertising and maintaining the integrity of the profession. Respect of client confidences, candour toward the tribunal, truthfulness in statements to others, and professional independence are some of the defining features of legal ethics.

- **Business Ethics:** examines ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that can arise in a business environment. This includes Corporate Social Responsibility, a concept whereby organizations consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, employees, shareholders, communities and the environment in all aspects of their operations, over and above the statutory obligation to comply with legislation.

- **Environmental Ethics:** considers the ethical relationship between human beings and the natural environment. It addresses questions like "Should we continue to clear forests for the sake of human consumption?"; "Should we continue to make gasoline powered vehicles, depleting fossil fuel resources while the technology exists to create zero-emission vehicles?"; "What environmental obligations do we need to keep for future generations?"; "Is it right for humans to knowingly cause the extinction of a species for the (perceived or real) convenience of humanity?"

- **Information Ethics:** investigates the ethical issues arising from the development and application of computers and information technology. It is concerned with issues like the privacy of information, whether artificial agents may be moral, how one should behave in the infosphere, and ownership and copyright problems arising from the creation, collection, recording, distribution, processing, etc., of information.

- **Media Ethics:** deals with the specific ethical principles and standards of media in general, including the ethical issues relating to journalism, advertising and marketing, and entertainment media.

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics is defined as the moral relationship between humans and the natural environment (Buzzle 2011). It is an area of environmental philosophy that faces a lot of conflict due to the various subdivisions in terms of ethical perceptions. For traditional and religious views, some people believe that they were given dominion over nature's plants and animals to

serve their needs. The idea of a human-centered nature, or anthropocentrism, explicitly states that humans are the sole bearers of intrinsic value and all other living things are there to sustain humanity's existence (MacKinnon 2007, p. 331). The 'ecological footprint'(Gaston 2005, p. 239) that resulted from human greed has led over the decades to massive alteration in nature's balance, as well as to many recognizable environmental crises the world is facing today. By contrast, ecocentrism recognizes a nature-centered system of values, and extends the inherent worth to all living things regardless of their usefulness to humans (MacKinnon2007, p. 336). It is believed that the human race have the responsibility to all biological life on Earth because, aside from being the most consuming species of all, they are capable of thinking and perceiving Earth as a whole. Humans' ill-treatment towards the environment is not only drastically altering the ecosystem, but also threatening human survival; researchers and scientists are aware that the end of the world is inevitable some point in the future, and the only thing people can control is the rate of facing humanity's extinction. *This essay* will demonstrate different approaches to environmental ethics, and focus on the effects unleashed on the environment as a result of human selfishness. In addition, it will deepen further to the fundamentals of how the human-nature relationship should flow in order to prevent possible exploitation.

Opposing environmental perceptions

Ecocentrism and anthropocentrism are recognized as one of the common ecological moral dilemmas (Kortenkampn & Moore 2001). People who hold anthropocentric view acknowledge themselves as being the most significant entities in the universe while disregarding animals and plants unless they provide life necessities such as nutrition, clothing, shelter and medical benefits (MacKinnon 2007, p.331); consequently, human exploitation and abuse of the natural environment has been observed on a global scale. On the other hand, ecocentrism, the term conceived by Aldo Leopold (Leopold 1949), recognizes intrinsic value in all living things on earth regardless of their usefulness to humans. It also encourages people to respect and care for animals and plants for their own sake. Questions arise as to why people fail to respect non-human species and mistreat nature only to enhance their living standards. As cited in Wapner and Matthew (2009, p. 205), answers for such questions were proposed by various scholars who tend to blame Judeo-Christian tradition, modernity, capitalism and patriarchy (men's domination of women (Keller & Golley2000 , p. 6)) for orienting people to value nature only for what it supplies to humanity which results in the heavy consumption of natural resources. The relationship between anthropocentrism and patriarchy, as proposed by Keller & Golley (2000, p. 6), is that they are both 'validated by the same conceptual logic', i.e. anthropocentrism and patriarchy encourage dominion over women and nature where they are disregarded in some decisions and negatively affected.

Effects of Anthropocentric Practices

The anthropocentric perception is widespread and is considered to be responsible for severe environmental crisis ranging from global warming, ozone depletion and water scarcity to the loss of biological diversity. Deforestation, for example, contributes to global warming where tree-logging means less absorption of carbon dioxide, leading to more greenhouse gases trapped in the atmosphere. A domino effect of such kind would lead to severe climate changes resulting in the extinction of various species due to habitat-sabotage (Wilson 2003). Deriving from an anthropocentric view, people cut down trees to build houses, and take up low-income jobs based on forest products; so that the innate value of trees gets ignored, and destructive global outcomes emerge.

Human Nature Harmony

According to the inelastic principles of both anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, the ability to make environmental decisions to satisfy both positions is difficult. Quite candidly, nature as well as humanity is devastated when anthropocentrism is practised; and the conversion to ecocentrism overnight is impossible especially in the developed societies because of their heavy reliance on resources and generation of waste (Wapner & Matthew 2009, p. 212). Deep ecologists' platform claims that justification is made upon people only when their intervention in the natural wildlife is vital to human needs, i.e. for survival not for luxury (MacKinnon 2007, p. 339). According to George Sessions and Arne Naess's (coiner of the term Deep Ecology in Naess 1973) basic principles of deep ecology, they encircle anthropocentrism and ecocentrism by acknowledging intrinsic value in all nature's beings and allowing consuming species to benefit from what the environment offers to fulfill vital needs. For instance, interfering with the environment to build a golf course or a house patio is unethical because they are hardly essential for survival, not to mention the alteration caused to Earth and vegetation (MacKinnon 2007, p. 339). As mentioned earlier, ethical decisions related to environment can be very paradoxical. In order to make the decision that would benefit humans and do no irreparable harm to nature, people must weigh up the possible consequences and determine which one is ought to take precedence (MacKinnon 2007). For example, extracting oil to produce energy is harmful to the ecosphere yet beneficial to humans for various applications like producing fuels and pesticides aside from economical gain. Setting forth the possible damages, it is conspicuous that choosing to use oil excessively as an energy resource is not an environmental-friendly action; therefore, striving to find an alternative energy resource is more of a deep-ecological mentality. After researches and efforts for a solution, scientists in this field were able to recycle restaurants' waste vegetable-oil to produce biodiesel to power automobiles (MacKinnon 2007, p.341). Applying the recycling process, we reduce natural resources consumption, and therefore

regard the inherent value of nature. Some might complain that alternative energy resources, such as solar power, are expensive to obtain; however, using nanotechnology, flexible sheets of solar cells were invented with a much reduced cost than photovoltaic cells used today (Carlstrom 2005). Looking at the industrious development humanity has arrived at, it is agreeable to conclude that people are smart enough to find solutions for many challenges; yet, sacrificing the effort is the step to take; unfortunately, it is not always possible because at times political and economical factors alter our inner decent choice. As globally recognized, people fail to take care of one another, and that is observed evidently through wars, where many lives are regarded worthless, and through the remarkable difference between social classes. Unless people recognize the inherent value in every human being and transform this respect towards the environment, Earth will remain under threat (Wapner & Matthew 2009, p. 204).

Approaches to Ethics

The "approaches to ethics" pertain to the different ways the subject matter of ethics has been dealt with or understood by different schools. When you understand the basics of the different ethical schools, you will not only have a clear grasp over the dimension of ethics in its extent, but also have an understanding of the different bases on which an action is claimed to be right or wrong. Understanding of the different approaches to ethics would also help you solve questions on ethical dilemmas.

The Rights Approach: An important approach to ethics has its roots in the philosophy of the 18th-century thinker Immanuel Kant and others like him, who focused on the individual's right to choose for herself or himself. According to these philosophers, what makes human beings different from mere things is that people have dignity based on their ability to choose freely what they will do with their lives, and they have a fundamental moral right to have these choices respected. People are not objects to be manipulated; it is a violation of human dignity to use people in ways they do not freely choose. Of course, many different, but related, rights are thought to exist — besides this basic one. These other rights can be thought of as different aspects of the basic right to be treated as we choose. Some other rights might include such things as right to the truth, privacy rights, a right not to be injured, and a right to what is agreed (i.e., we have a right to what has been promised by those with whom we have freely entered into a contract or agreement). In deciding whether an action is moral or immoral using this approach, then, we must ask, does the action respect the moral rights of everyone? Actions are wrong to the extent that they violate the rights of individuals; the more serious the violation, the more wrongful the action.

Rights approach: Important Points

- Identifies certain interests or activities that our behavior must respect, especially those areas of our lives that are of such value to us that they merit protection from others.

- Each person has a fundamental right to be respected and treated as a free and equal rational person capable of making his or her own decisions.

- This implies other rights (e.g., privacy, free consent, freedom of conscience, etc.) that must be protected if a person is to have the freedom to direct his or her own life.

- Keep in mind that it is often difficult to agree on exactly which rights we have.

- The principle states: "An action or policy is morally right only if those persons affected by the decision are not used merely as instruments for advancing some goal, but are fully informed and treated only as they have freely and knowingly consented to be treated."

The Utilitarian Approach: Utilitarianism was conceived in the 19th century by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill to help legislators determine which laws were morally best. Both Bentham and Mill suggested that ethical actions are those that provide the greatest balance of good over evil. To analyze an issue using the utilitarian approach, we first identify the various courses of action available to us. Second, we ask who will be affected by each action and what benefits or harms will be derived from each. And third, we choose the action that will produce the greatest benefits and the least harm. The ethical action is the one that provides the greatest good for the greatest number.

Utilitarian Approach: Important Points:

- Focuses on the consequences that actions or policies have on the well-being ("utility") of all persons reasonably foreseen to be directly or indirectly (but rather immediately) affected by the action or policy.

- Keep in mind, that different people often identify benefits and harms differently.

- The principle states: "Of any two actions, the more ethical one will produce the greater balance of benefits over harms."

The Virtue Approach: The virtue approach to ethics assumes that there are certain ideals toward which we should strive. These ideals provide for the full development of our humanity, and are discovered through thoughtful reflection on what kind of people we have the potential to become. Virtues are attitudes or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop our highest potential. They enable us to pursue the ideals we have adopted. Honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, and prudence are examples of virtues frequently cited throughout the world. Virtues are like habits; that is, once acquired, they become characteristic of a person. Moreover, a person who has developed virtues will be naturally disposed to act in ways consistent with moral principles. The virtuous person is the ethical person. In dealing with an

ethical problem using the virtue approach, we might ask, 'What kind of person should I be?' 'What will promote the development of character within myself, within my community?' etc.

Virtue Approach: Important Points:

- Focuses on attitudes, dispositions, or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop our human potential.

- Keep in mind, different communities may identify differing virtues.

- The principle states: "What is ethical is what develops moral virtues in ourselves and our communities."

The Fairness (or Justice) Approach: The fairness or justice approach to ethics has its roots in the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said that "equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally." The basic moral question in this approach is: How fair is an action? Does it treat everyone in the same way, or does it show favouritism and discrimination? Favouritism gives benefits to some people without a justifiable reason for singling them out; discrimination imposes burdens on people who are no different from those on whom burdens are not imposed. Both favouritism and discrimination are unjust and wrong.

Fairness or Justice Approach: Important Points:

- Focuses on how fairly or unfairly our actions distribute benefits and burdens among the members of a group.

- Fairness requires consistency in the way people are treated.

- The principle states: "Treat people the same unless there are morally relevant differences between them."

The Common Good Approach: This approach to ethics assumes a society comprising individuals whose own good is inextricably linked to the good of the community. Community members are bound by the pursuit of common values and goals. The common good is a notion that originated more than 2,000 years ago in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. More recently, contemporary ethicist John Rawls defined the common good as "certain general conditions that are...equally to everyone's advantage." In this approach, we focus on ensuring that the social policies, social systems, institutions, and environments on which we depend are beneficial to all. Examples of goods common to all include affordable health care, effective public safety, peace among nations, a just legal system, and an unpolluted environment.

Appeals to the common good urge us to view ourselves as members of the same community, reflecting on broad questions concerning the kind of society we want to become and how we are to achieve that society. While respecting and valuing the freedom of individuals to pursue their own goals,

the common-good approach challenges us also to recognize and further those goals we share in common.

Common Good Approach: Important Points:

• Presents a vision of society as a community whose members are joined in a shared pursuit of values and goals they hold in common.

• The community is comprised of individuals whose own good is inextricably bound to the good of the whole.

• The principle states: "What is ethical is what advances the common good."

What is Common Good and Why It is Important in Recent Discussion

What exactly is "the common good", and why has it come to have such a critical place in current discussions of problems in our society? The common good is a notion that originated over two thousand years ago in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. More recently, the contemporary ethicist, John Rawls, defined the common good as "certain general conditions that are...equally to everyone's advantage". The Catholic religious tradition, which has a long history of struggling to define and promote the common good, defines it as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment." The common good, then, consists primarily of having the social systems, institutions, and environments on which we all depend work in a manner that benefits all people. Examples of particular common goods or parts of the common good include an accessible and affordable public health care system, and effective system of public safety and security, peace among the nations of the world, a just, legal and political system, and unpolluted natural environment, and a flourishing economic system. Because such systems, institutions, and environments have such a powerful impact on the well-being of members of a society, it is no surprise that virtually every social problem in one way or another is linked to how well these systems and institutions are functioning. (Source: Ethics V5, N1, Spring 1992)

Challenges to Common Good

It might seem that since all citizens benefit from the common good, we would all willingly respond to urgings that we each cooperate to establish and maintain the common good. But numerous observers have identified a number of obstacles that hinder us, as a society, from successfully doing so.

First, according to some philosophers, the very idea of a common good is inconsistent with a pluralistic society like ours. Different people have different ideas about what is worthwhile or what constitutes "the good

life for human beings", differences that have increased during the last few decades as the voices of more and more previously silenced groups, such as women and minorities, have been heard. Given these differences, some people urge, it will be impossible for us to agree on what particular kind of social systems, institutions, and environments we will all pitch in to support.

And even if we agreed upon what we all valued, we would certainly disagree about the relative values things have for us. While all may agree, for example, that an affordable health system, a healthy educational system, and a clean environment are all parts of the common good, some will say that more should be invested in health than in education, while others will favour directing resources to the environment over both health and education. Such disagreements are bound to undercut our ability to evoke a sustained and widespread commitment to the common good. In the face of such pluralism, efforts to bring about the common good can only lead to adopting or promoting the views of some, while excluding others, violating the principle of treating people equally. Moreover, such efforts would force everyone to support some specific notion of the common good, violating the freedom of those who do not share in that goal, and inevitably leading to paternalism (imposing one group's preference on others), tyranny, and oppression.

A second problem encountered by proponents of the common good is what is sometimes called the "free-rider problem". The benefits that a common good provides are, as we noted, available to everyone, including those who choose not to do their part to maintain the common good. Individuals can become "free riders" by taking the benefits the common good provides while refusing to do their part to support the common good. An adequate water supply, for example, is a common good from which all people benefit. But to maintain an adequate supply of water during a drought, people must conserve water, which entails sacrifices. Some individuals may be reluctant to do their share, however, since they know that so long as enough other people conserve, they can enjoy the benefits without reducing their own consumption. If enough people become free riders in this way, the common good which depends on their support will be destroyed. Many observers believe that this is exactly what has happened to many of our common goods, such as the environment or education, where the reluctance of all persons to support efforts to maintain the health of these systems has led to their virtual collapse.

The third problem encountered by attempts to promote the common good is that of individualism. Our historical traditions place a high value on individual freedom, on personal rights, and on allowing each person to "do her own thing". Our culture views society as comprised of separate independent individuals who are free to pursue their own individual goals and interests without interference from others. In this individualistic culture it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to convince people that they should sacrifice some of their freedom, some of their personal goals, and some of their self-interest, for the sake of the "common

good". Our cultural traditions, in fact, reinforce the individual who thinks that they should not have to contribute to the community's common good, but should be left free to pursue their own personal ends.

Finally, appeals to the common good are confronted by the problem of an unequal sharing of burdens. Maintaining a common good often requires that particular individuals or particular groups bear costs that are much greater than those borne by others. Maintaining an unpolluted environment, for example, may require that particular firms that pollute install costly pollution control devices, undercutting profits. Making employment opportunities more equal may require that some groups, such as white males, sacrifice their own employment chances. Making the health system affordable and accessible to all may require that insurers accept lower premiums, that physicians accept lower salaries, or that those with particularly costly diseases or conditions forego the medical treatment on which their lives depend. Forcing particular groups or individuals to carry such unequal burdens "for the sake of the common good", is, at least arguably, unjust. Moreover, the prospect of having to carry such heavy and unequal burdens leads such groups and individuals to resist any attempts to secure common goods. (Source: Ethics V5, N1, Spring 1992)

How the Ethical Approaches Relate to Real Life Example

Imagine that you have an elderly aunt who is very wealthy. While she has no children of her own, you are her favourite among all her nieces and nephews. As a result, she plans to leave all her wealth to you. Recently, your wealthy aunt was taken ill, and you received a phone call that she was in the hospital; furthermore, it would be good if you could visit her in the hospital this weekend. Unfortunately, you have two expensive tickets to a concert this weekend. The concert is being performed by your favourite band, and you've been waiting for almost a year to see them perform live; You bought the tickets for your partner and yourself to share the experience together. Because of the travel time involved, you cannot attend the concert and travel home too to visit your sick aunt in the hospital. You decide to forgo the concert and instead you travel home to visit your ailing aunt in her sickbed.

Different approaches sometimes recommend different courses of action; at other times they recommend the same (or similar) courses of action, but for very different reasons.

The Utilitarian Approach: For a utilitarian, the decision might turn to such considerations as 'how much fun the concert will be,' 'can I visit auntie another week?' 'If I don't visit, will she remove me from her will?' 'If I cancel going to the concert and tell auntie that she's more important, I'm sure to get all her inheritance,' etc. In none of these situations is a utilitarian being selfish. One's own happiness is important, but it must be put into the perspective of everyone else's happiness as well. So when auntie will be only a little disappointed if you don't visit and you'll be very happy at the concert,

then it works out for you to go to the concert. However, if auntie will be very disappointed in case you don't visit, and if you'll feel guilty about going to the concert, then it's bad for you to choose the concert. Of course, if you factor in the likely effects on your inheritance, your "happiness-quotient" goes way up if you visit auntie in the hospital. In fact, your happiness goes up so much that it virtually guarantees that you should forgo the concert and visit your sick aunt in the hospital.

The Rights Approach: The basic idea here is that people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. While it might be a bit strong to say that my aunt has a right to have me visit, it is less unusual to say that I have a general duty to visit ailing elderly relatives in the hospital. So, it is not obvious that the rights approach would command me to visit my aunt. However, certain considerations are clearly out. For example, if I do visit my sick aunt, I must not choose to do so in order to ensure that I obtain her inheritance. Rights theorists say that this kind of thinking (or the utilitarian ethical approach) does not treat the aunt as a person, but instead looks at her as a bag of money. When you choose to visit your sick aunt, you should be motivated out of respect for her as a sick, elderly lady with no children of her own; you should try to understand her loneliness and vulnerability, and you should visit her because of your respect for her and your willingness to see her well. So, the money you might inherit from her or the fun you might have at the concert simply do not count to a rights theorist. In short, even if she weren't wealthy, a rights theorist would have you drop the concert and go visit her.

The Virtue Approach: You might read the above two perspectives and think that the proposed choices reveal important aspects of your personal character. What sort of person would visit his elderly aunt just to get her inheritance? What sort of person would put his own fun-time aside in order to visit his ailing aunt in the hospital? So, when you're trying to decide what you should do, you could just ask yourself questions like these directly. Do you want to be the sort of person who only visits his sick elderly aunt to get her money? If you've thinking about traditional virtues such as honesty, courage, faithfulness, integrity, etc., then you will ask yourself which course of action best embodies these virtues. Here, the answer may not be so cut and dried. If you're honest, you tell your sick aunt that you have these great concert tickets and you're been waiting to see the show for months? If you're faithful in general, to whom should you show the greatest faithfulness? Yourself? Your partner? Your family? In virtue ethics, the balancing act is often more difficult because there are many virtuous character traits one should try and embody, and each may have different targets. In the end, one must strive to achieve the greatest harmony of virtues. So you should probably be faithful to your family and visit your aunt in the hospital, while also being honest with yourself in facing the temptation that you really wanted to go to the concert (so maybe you're not so nice at heart), you should be courageous enough to tell the bad news to your partner, etc.

The Common Good Approach: Here, your focus is on community whose members are joined in a shared pursuit of values, and you often get to define the relevant community. However, a family is an obvious example of a 'community'. So, when you think about what to do this weekend, you do not focus on happiness (like utilitarianism), nor do you focus on building a virtuous character for yourself, nor on respecting your aunt's needs. Rather, you ask yourself which course of action would be the best for the family as a whole. So you might need to have more information, such as 'Will other family members be with auntie this weekend?' or 'If other family-members will be there this weekend, would it be better for me to visit next weekend?' Is it better for me to visit her in the hospital, or stay with her over Spring Break, once she's back at her home?' Either of these last two would mean you can go to the concert this weekend, but your motivation is doing what best helps the family. The idea is that you are making yourself available as a "team-member" to work with other family-members in ensuring that auntie, and everyone else in the family, get the assistance needed.

Conclusion: So, in the end, the various ethical approaches represent methods used to evaluate situations and recommend ethical courses of action. The various approaches often disagree on the best thing to do. Even when they agree on what to do, they do so for very different reasons. As a result, each approach often needs certain questions answered that are irrelevant to another approach. It is handy to know which approach one tends to use for personal decisions. In business, it is important to know what the company values are and how they integrate into policies guiding the actions of employees. And when the company is a Multi-national, it is vital to understand all aspects of differing approaches used in the various host-countries in which one operates. For an administrator in India, the professional ethical code of conduct is a valuable tool in the decision making process. In addition, wherever the code does not give a clear guideline, the administrator will apply the diverse approaches to ethics in coming to a decision especially when faced with an ethical dilemma. Even when two approaches would come to the same result, you should not ignore features that are relevant to the other approach, if for no other reason than to not insult your friends, colleagues, family members, hosts, etc. Try always to appreciate the fact that many methodologies can work together well, if first you take time to understand and integrate them.

Five case studies with discussion

Case study 1

Conflicting Ethics in Private and Public Relationships

(We shall study about Ethics in Private and Public Relationships in the next section. However, the case study below of overriding devotion to law and society over family will help you understand conflicting ethics in Private and Public Relationships).

It is unusual that one value or duty obviously trumps another. The tragic tale of Pavlik Morozov, one time hero of Soviet communism, illustrates the friction between family and public service obligations and between abstract justice and personal compassion.

As a youth, Pavlik denounced his father for aiding Kulaks when the Stalinist regime of the early 1930s considered it treason to help these rich peasants. His father exemplified the duty of all good Soviet citizens to become informers, even at the expense of family ties. The kulaks were blamed for Pavlik's murder after he informed on his father and testified against him in court. Pavlik's example became a fable by which to teach children an overriding devotion to law and society.

The case of Pavlik highlights the ethical conflicts one may face between private and public relationships: Pavlik's duty towards the nation had overridden his love for family, in that he exposed his father's wrong deeds to the state authorities.

Case Study 2

Conflict of Interest

You are an HR manager in a private firm and have been assigned the task of recruiting a Project Director by way of a written test and interview. From among all candidates, you have to select the one who scores maximum in both these tests. While correcting the answer sheets, you find that candidate X is highly suitable for the prescribed test, but has made a small mistake: he has assigned a wrong number to one of the answers, that is, he has wrongly stated A3 instead of A2. During the interviews, candidate X scores higher than another candidate Y – who according to you is not as suitable for the post as candidate X. Here by rectifying the error yourself, you could help both, candidate X and your parent organization when it comes to the most suitable candidate being recruited for the post. So what should an HR manager do in this case: As a well wisher of his own company, should he drive his conscience to make the necessary modification in Candidate X's answer sheet and select him instead of candidate Y?

Before the explanation of this case study, it is important to discuss the smell test which helps in identifying an ethical issue.

SMELL TEST
How to Identify an Ethical Issue
Ethical judgments are made about actions or situations that are right or wrong, good or bad. One clue that an action or situation needs an ethical rather than simply a business judgment is that the action or situation involves actual or potential harm to someone or something. Another clue would be that there seems to be a possibility of a violation of what we generally consider right or good.

How to use the smell test

Ask yourself the following questions:

"What would the action or situation we are considering smell like if we read about in a front-page news article or in a popular blog?

Would we be comfortable reading a Wall Street Journal story that our company was doing this or letting the current situation continue for long?

Would I be comfortable explaining it to my spouse, or my grandmother?"

The strengths of the smell test:

• It focuses on what other ethical people in the society would think. It prevents us from taking special advantages/benefits for ourselves.

• It recognises that morality is about what others think as much as about what I think.

• It enlists the emotion of shame, a powerful motivator to be sure we are getting this right.

The weaknesses:

• The smell test is only as good as the society we live in. The society may be blind to the ethical dimensions of an action or situation, may accept unethical actions as ethical, or be divided on whether the action is right or wrong.

• As the olfactory image reminds us, living with bad smells or unethical conduct for a long time may dull a person's ability to notice them.

• It tells us that an action is an ethical issue but not why it is right or wrong. Knowing why an action is right or wrong can help explain it to others. Knowing why it is wrong can help to modify the action to make it right. To determine why, we will have to move beyond the smell test.

   The Smell Test is familiar ground in most businesses and is a good place to begin. It is a "quick and dirty" test for deciding if something is an ethical issue and useful because brand name and a person's reputation are important in business.

Explanation

The application of ethical tests such as virtue test and smell test make it clear that the HR manager should not modify the answer sheet of any candidate as this would go against the principle of objectivity in terms of evaluation. It would also be illegal.

However, the manager's bias towards candidate X, for the sake of his company, appears to be correct – but is ethically wrong on the grounds of conflict of interest. Considering the manager wants to recruit a candidate

for his company, he should not be the one evaluating the candidates' performance vis-a-vis the test.

In such a situation of conflict of interest, it is essential to understand one's role. The role of evaluator has to be performed with objectivity, without any bias in terms of caste, creed, religion or any personal ideology and professional interest.

Any bias towards candidate X – due to any association with the company – would be against the principle of natural justice for other candidates. Thus, it would be unfair and illegal for an evaluator to make changes in any of the answer sheets.

If indeed nobody other than candidate X is suitable for the post, then – as a possible alternative – the HR manager may explore the possibility of cancelling this round of tests but only after citing the necessary reason(s) for doing so and seeking the necessary approvals from his seniors. This will ensure that the manager does not make any decision which is unfair, illegal and unethical.

Case Study 3

Unethical Conduct in Personal Relationship

Mr. X is an efficient and devoted employee in your organization. He is married. Impressed with his sincere work, you have given him additional duties. One day while leaving office, you find him in a compromising position with his personal staff. Sensing some wrong in their relationship, you feel cheated and hurt – you would have never expected a devoted employee to behave in such an unethical manner so as to cheat his wife! You find a contradiction in his personal and public life, he had never cheated you and had accomplished the given tasks with utmost sincerity. In his private life it appears that he is cheating his wife. Discuss the issues in this case.

What action would you take against Mr. X?

(a)   Neglect his conduct?

(b)   Take stern against him?

(c)   Will speak to him about his wrong conduct?

(d)   Any other action?

There are several possible alternative actions as described above. Subjecting this case to the ethical test we find this case to fall under the ethical case because (i) the action or situation involves actual or potential harm to someone or something; (ii) there seems to be a possibility of a violation of what we generally consider right or good. The action of Mr X involves potential harm to the organization in that his conduct breaches the code of conduct expected in the office; and harm to his wife's trust and emotions. Moreover, his conduct cannot be considered right or good.

Therefore, you should speak to Mr. X about his wrong conduct in the hope that he will mend his ways. However, if he does not mend his ways stern action will be taken against him and his personal staff.

There are three ethical frameworks for you to take decision in the above case. These three frame works are the consequentialist frame work, the duty frame work and the virtue frame work. The consequences of X's action will be harmful for his wife, for his personal staff and for the culture of the office while the consequences of your action in first warning him and then taking stern action will be useful for everyone including the office culture. According to the duty frame work, you should consider it your duty to warn and take strict disciplinary action against an errant staff of your office. The virtue frame work focuses on the virtuous qualities. In this case, the conduct of X is not virtuous, while your conduct in speaking to X so that he improves his conduct is a virtuous act.

Case Study 4

Private Relationship Influencing Public Duty

You are an officer in charge of project X. Some work related to your project needs to be outsourced through the process of issuing a tender. Three firms have applied for this project, one of which is owned by your brother in law. You know that this firm does a good job when it comes to such projects. Besides, at home, your wife has also often reminded you to favour him. What would you do in such a situation?

This is an ethical issue and not just a day to day business case. The issue in this case is that one of the parties to have applied in response to the tender is your brother-in-law. Although his firm does excellent work, and he deserves to get the contract, it is immaterial as far as you are concerned because you will still be questioned for awarding the contract to him. You will have to face certain questions like, what will be the consequences of your action, what is your duty in this case, what is the right thing to do in this case, etc. The utilitarian approach will enable you to give the contract to your brother-in-law as it will make you, him and your wife happy along with benefiting the company you are working for. However, from the perspective of your duty, you should give up the decision making once it is known to you that one of the tenders has come from your brother in law because that is the official code of conduct followed in most of the organizations. Alternatively, you should inform your boss of this development and then wait for further instructions from him. If he requests you to take the decision, you should go into the merits of the tenders and select the best among them even if it happens to come from your brother in law.

Case Study 5

Should you laugh at or make fun of sensitive issues

Ramesh and Geeta are classmates. They are part of a large group of friends. They often go out for activities together. One day they go to an amusement park. All the friends have a lot of fun. After one of the rides, Prakash a common friend gets disoriented. He is unable to walk properly for a few minutes. Ramesh makes fun of him and calls him a "spas" slang for 'spastic'. Geeta gets very angry. She tells Ramesh that Spastics suffer many kinds of problems; one should not use the word Spas to make fun of anyone. Ramesh is surprised at her vehemence. He tells her he was simply joking and that most people use the word as slang.

Do you think Geeta is justified in being so angry? Also, is it okay to use certain terms as derogatory slang when they may have some other meaning in a different context?

The term slang is used to cover a wide array of words. Today even curse words are used as "affectionate" slang, e.g., bitch, etc… In such a scenario it may seem as if Geeta is over reacting. However, one must consider the larger picture. First, name calling can lead to low self-esteem. That may not be the case here but over time, it can lead to issues of self-esteem and identity crisis. When we use a word as slang we must not forget the original connotation of the word. India is a country full of different identities. To use an identity as slang can build a negative connotation for the word.

There has been a lot of discrimination in our country through the ages over caste identities. The scheduled castes in particular have faced a lot of discrimination. Earlier they were not addressed by names but by their castes. This is why Gandhiji came up with the term of harijans to remove the negative connotation associated with the scheduled castes.

Each person is unique; to generalise is to take away that uniqueness. In this particular case, Geeta has a valid point. By making fun of someone by calling them a spastic is to make fun of all spastics. This is definitely wrong. Spastics suffer from a specific medical disorder but that does not mean they are less able than anyone or do not deserve respect. Geeta may have been too strong in her reaction, but using terms like 'spas', or 'moron' is certainly wrong as they have a very specific connotation and are different from generic terms.

ETHICS in Private and Public Relationships

Ethics in Public Relationships

Public relations is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization (such as a business, government agency, or a nonprofit organization) and the public.

Public relations may include an organization or individual gaining exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment. This differentiates it from advertising as a form of marketing communication.

The aim of public relations is to inform the public, prospective customers, investors, partners, employees and other stakeholders and ultimately persuade them to maintain a certain view about the organization, its leadership, products, or political decisions.

It includes designing communications campaigns, writing news releases and other content for news, working with the press, arranging interviews for company spokespeople, website and social media content, etc.

Public Relations has now become a vital function affecting management decisions and influencing public opinion in every public or private organisation. Today, it is indispensable for any organisation. The reasons for it being so are as follows:

• Advancement in telecommunication and transport.

• Opening up of traditionally closed societies and increasing globalisation.

• Recognition of right of expression and freedom of information.

• Governments employing Public Relations practice for staying in power, for development task, etc.

• Growth in business, amalgamations, collaborations, operating with subsidiaries, spreading across national boundaries and in different cultures.

Ethics in Public Relations : Public Relations recognize a long-term responsibility and seek to persuade and to achieve mutual understanding by securing the willing acceptance of attitudes and ideas. It can succeed only when the basic policy is ethical, and the means used as truthful. In Public Relations, the ends can never justify the use of false, harmful or questionable means.

However, it is a difficult task to describe what is ethical and what is unethical. It would be simpler to state it as a matter of choosing between the right and wrong options in keeping with conscience. Anything that causes dissonance in the mind brings about a feeling of guilt and dishonesty. And dishonest communication cannot be an aid to cementing relationships. Public are also not to be underestimated as fools. As Abraham Lincoln said, 'you can fool some people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time.'

There are a number of acts that could be classified as unethical, ranging from suppressing of news to misleading the audience. Unethical act in public relations may include:

• Suppressing unfavourable news
• Misrepresenting facts

- Postponing to serve a cause but actually serving some other interest
- Promising results that cannot be obtained
- Use of undesirable method towards pressurising editors for carrying publicity material.

With increasing education, the consumers and public have became aware of their rights and a public Relations person may have to deal with pressure groups like trade unions, consumer protection groups, environment protection activities, etc. Therefore, it is imperative for a public Relations practitioner to be self regulating, ethical as also be careful about the legal aspects of communication.

Values in Public Relationships : The importance of articulating ethics and the values that define and underpin the public service, cannot be underscored. This is seen as critical to providing both public officials and the public with a common frame of reference regarding the principles and standards to be applied and in assisting public officials to develop an appreciation of the ethical issues involved in effective and efficient public service delivery.

An example of the importance attached to the above-mentioned ethical principles is found in the "Seven Principles of Public Life" by the Nolan Committee in the United Kingdom. (This can be applied to other public relationship)

Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life:

Selflessness	Public officials should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
Integrity	Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
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 their choice on merit.
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.
Openness	Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest demands it.

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.
Leadership	Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

In the domain of public relations ethics encompasses the values of honesty, loyalty, openness, integrity, respect, fairness, and accurate communication. This view of morality is not shared by all practitioners of public relations.

Historically, the view of the general public on public relations practitioners are related to unethical practices, untruthful and misleading messages. Some pundits even go to the extreme of suggesting that ethics cannot exist in the context of public relations because the practice itself is of manipulation, persuasion, and propaganda.

There are various studies that have been conducted that indicate that modern public relations is having deleterious and very significant effects on the democratic process in place today. This is because interested parties have the opportunity to purposely confuse, mislead, and disrupt any public debates about issues vital to the public interest. This meddling in an obviously key democratic process can result in the reduction of society's ability to react effectively in issues of societal and political importance.

What guidelines can public relations practitioners follow to avoid moral and ethical conflicts?

1. **Be aware of ethics in public relations:** Professionals in the field of public relations must have knowledge of and focus on ethics before they encounter a situation of difficult moral decision. It will be too late to seek moral guidance after a crisis of conflicting interest arises. Practitioners must be fully familiar with the ethical values of their organizations before these values are put under public scrutiny.

2. **Be Aware of your values:** Public relations practitioners should be totally aware of their own values. Taking stock of their own values as individuals and practitioners of public relations will be of immense help at the moment when these values are put under pressure by a client, a supervisor, or by the public.

3. **Be able to identify sticky situations:** Be vigilant of and identify issues that have the potential to become ethical dilemmas. The failure to identify and act on ethical issues will often result in costly failures and public relations debacles for the organization concerned. Early identification of ethical issues will allow more time for analysis, discussion, research, and resolution of these issues. A proactive position is easier to take rather than merely reacting to issues that have been brought to light by the public or by media.

4.   **Walk the talk of the mission statement**: Public relations professionals should be aware of the fundamental values inherent in the organization's mission statement or code of ethics. The ethical approach nearest to organizational values should be focussed on. The function of public relations in this area would be to encourage discussion and ethical debate throughout the organization by using internal communications.

5.   **Train your staff well:** Educating top level management on the capabilities on public relations beyond media relations in the resolution and prevention of ethical dilemmas can contribute to the success of the organization by the utilization of issues management, relationships with the public, and conflict resolution methods.

Ethical Issues Confronting Public Relations for Practitioners

Public relations practitioners have to strive to overcome the bad reputations of "spin doctors," who twist the truth to suit their clients' needs. A true public relations practitioner actually adheres to a strict code of ethics, promoted by the Public Relations Society of America and the Institute for Public Relations. Your small business can use public relations effectively if your PR practitioner follows the accepted ethics of the profession in dealing with common issues.

1.   **Providing Truthful Information :** Public relations practitioners constantly confront pressures to bend or twist the truth. For example, if a warehouse burns down, it could be tempting to make it seem like a minor incident, when in fact the company has lost a significant amount of inventory. Being honest prevents the public and industry peers from coming back later and claiming you tried to cover up the seriousness of the loss. Instead, the PR practitioner can state the truth and emphasize the owner's determination to bounce back and not only replace the inventory, but build a safer warehouse. In this way, the truth can be inspirational and instill confidence in the business.

2.   **Offering Authentic Context :** An ethical public relations communication offers more than mere facts; it offers context for a story. This means explaining to readers why an event has importance or why company leaders take the stance they take. For example, simply announcing that a business has recalled a product due to safety concerns could be accurate. However, if this recall were the result of a government agency raising the concerns, that information would have to be included by an ethical PR practitioner.

3.   **Advising Leaders :** PR practitioners face an important ethical issue when advising company leaders. These practitioners may have to muster a great deal of courage when confronting leaders who are contemplating violating the company's values. For example, if a leader is considering reducing employees' hours so that they will not qualify as full-time

workers and thus won't receive benefits, it's the PR practitioner's duty to speak up. In this case, the practitioner has a duty to not only point out the ethical misstep the leader is about to take, but also to raise the issue of how the press and the public will judge the decision.

4.   **Fellow Sponsors :** Ethics come into play when a PR practitioner announces a company's involvement in social causes, charities and fund-raising events. The practitioner has an ethical duty to reveal not only the client's involvement, but the involvement of other sponsors. For example, if the client's company sponsored a marathon and a controversial company was also involved, that should be included in the announcement.

Ethics in Public Administration

The notion of ethics has expanded itself to involve all major realms of human existence. Here, an attempt is made to outline certain salient aspects of ethics in public administration. Broadly, they could be summarized as following maxims:

*   **Maxim of Legality and Rationality:** An administrator will follow the law and rules that are framed to govern and guide various categories of policies and decisions.

*   **Maxim of Responsibility and Accountability:** An administrator would not hesitate to accept responsibility for his decisions and actions. He would hold himself morally responsible for his actions and for the use of his discretion while making decisions. Moreover, he would be willing to be held accountable to higher authorities of governance and even to the people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of his decisions and actions.

*   **Maxim of Work Commitment:** An administrator would be committed to his duties and perform his work with involvement, intelligence and dexterity. As Swami Vivekananda observed: "Every duty is holy and devotion to duty is the highest form of worship." This would also entail a respect for time, punctuality and fulfilment of promises made. Work is considered not as a burden but as an opportunity to serve and constructively contribute to society.

*   **Maxim of Excellence:** An administrator would ensure the highest standards of quality in administrative decisions and actions and would not compromise with standards because of convenience or complacency. In a competitive international environment, an administrative system should faithfully adhere to the requisites of Total Quality Management.

*   **Maxim of Fusion:** An administrator would rationally bring about a fusion of individual, organisational and social goals to help evolve unison of ideals and imbibe in his behavior a commitment to such a

fusion. In a situation of conflicting goals, a concern for ethics should govern the choices made.

- **Maxim of Responsiveness and Resilience:** An administrator would respond effectively to the demands and challenges from the external as well as internal environment. He would adapt to environmental transformation and yet sustain the ethical norms of conduct. In situations of deviation from the prescribed ethical norms, the administrative system would show resilience and bounce back into the accepted ethical mould at the earliest opportunity.

- **Maxim of Utilitarianism:** While making and implementing policies and decisions, an administrator will ensure that these lead to the greatest good (happiness, benefits) of the greatest number.

- **Maxim of Compassion:** An administrator, without violating the prescribed laws and rules, would demonstrate compassion for the poor, the disabled and the weak while using his discretion in making decisions. At least, he would not grant any benefits to the stronger section of society only because they are strong and would not deny the due consideration to the weak, despite their weakness.

- **Maxim of National Interest:** Though universalistic in orientation and liberal in outlook, a civil servant, while performing his duties, would keep in view the impact of his action on his nation's strength and prestige. The Japanese, the Koreans, the Germans and the Chinese citizens (including civil servants), while performing their official roles, have at the back of their mind a concern and respect for their nation. This automatically raises the level of service rendered and the products delivered.

- **Maxim of justice:** Those responsible for formulation and execution of policies and decisions of governance would ensure that respect is shown to the principles of equality, equity, fairness, impartiality and objectivity and no special favours are doled out on the criteria of status, position, power, gender, class, caste or wealth.

- **Maxim of Transparency:** An administrator will make decisions and implement them in a transparent manner so that those affected by the decisions and those who wish to evaluate their rationale, will be able to understand the reasons behind such decisions and the sources of information on which these decisions were made.

- **Maxim of Integrity:** An administrator would undertake an administrative action on the basis of honesty and not use his power, position and discretion to serve his personal interests and the illegitimate interests of other individuals or groups.

Ethics is of critical importance in Public Administration. Ethics provide accountability between the public and the administration. Adhering to a

code of ethics ensures that the public receives what it needs in a fair manner. It also gives the administration guidelines for integrity in their operations. That integrity, in turn, helps foster the trust of the community. By creating this atmosphere of trust, the administration helps the public understand that they are working with their best interests in mind.

Additionally, a code of ethics creates standards of professionalism that co-workers in the public sector can expect from each other — the public can also expect the same from their leaders. With a strong code of ethics in public administration, leaders have the guidelines they need to carry out their tasks and inspire their employees and committees to enforce laws in a professional and equitable manner.

Another positive outcome of good ethics in public administration is timely and informative communication with the community. This kind of transparency builds trust and prevents or minimizes the potential issues that can arise when information is divulged from outside sources. If there is something of consequence that the public needs to know about, it's better for it to come directly from the leaders and administration. Communication also keeps all parties involved so that they can all work toward a common goal. Good communication ensures that the community can engage their leaders on important issues.

Ethics in Private Relationships

Introduction

It has often been said, "What happens in privacy does not hurt anyone." The motto for Las Vegas resonates this private versus public philosophy, "What happens in Las Vegas stays in Vegas." Or does it? Does it not get carried out by other means? Is anything truly secret? The implication of the two mottos above suggests that any indiscreet behavior that transpires in the privacy of a hotel room will not become publicly known and will not bring irreversible harm or affect that individual or the community. Accordingly, a person can be assured that there will be no public exposure of private indiscretions.

This raises the issue: Do private ethics have no bearing on public life or social ethics? Does what occurs in the privacy of a public official's home or office have no influence on public or social policy decisions? Can private ethical behavior be separated from social ethics without consequences? Can there be public or social ethics without underlying personal ethics? Is there a legitimate bifurcation between private and public ethics? These questions go to the heart of law, the extent of morality, relationships development, the inner life and its outward expression, and public and social policy development.

- Corruption will not conceal itself.
- The public can, as its right and duty, in every case of justifiable suspicion, call its servants to strict account, dismiss them, sue them in a law court or appoint an arbitrator or inspector to scrutinize their conduct, as it likes.
- People don't care about a public servant's rank/position.

Mahatma Gandhi: (Many years ago)

Private Lives and Public Policy

David Gill of the University of Southern California cuts to the heart of the matter concerning private and public ethics with a brilliant assessment of the relationship between social and personal ethics.

"It is impossible to maintain a clear and precise distinction between social ethics and personal (individual) ethics. No individual behavior is without social implications. No social situation or problem is without individual repercussions."

According to Gill, public policy and social ethics are intertwined. He again writes, "Public policy, politics, economics, war, poverty, education, racism, ecology, and crime: these are examples of the subject of social ethics."

All of the social institutions he identifies encompass a vast range of issues in every segment of society and cannot exist apart from individuals. Business, education, the church, professional associations, and government all involve people as they interact, exchange ideas, trade goods and services, and make decisions. They influence one another during these interchanges and affect the structure and moral environment of society.

Where is the line between a politician's personal and public life?

Everyone, including public figures, is entitled to privacy. But when a person goes into public life, he or she must understand: Certain issues that might be considered private for a private individual can become matters of reasonable public interest when that individual holds an office. Becoming a public servant means putting public interest ahead of your own.

What does that look like in practice? Everyone will draw the line between personal and public at a slightly different place, but generally, if a private matter affects the performance of the officeholder's duties, most people would agree that it is no longer private. So, for example, the president of the United States submits to a yearly physical, which is made public, because his or her health is of such key importance to the nation. Similarly, illnesses that affect job performance of local officials may be legitimate subjects of inquiry.

Behaviors that might impede performance, like substance abuse, are matters of public interest. Financial problems, especially in a person with budgetary responsibilities, may be germane.

Because a politician represents the public, constituents will be better represented if he or she practices the virtues of honesty and trustworthiness in both personal and private life. The reputation of local officials may have an important impact on the business climate of the city or public support for local initiatives, so the personal behavior of politicians may become a legitimate area of public concern.

Source: *Markvllo Center for Applied Arts at Santa Clara University.*

A politician's position in private and public life

At heart, this question is a form of a longstanding ethical debate about what is called "the unity of the virtues." To many of the ancient Greek philosophers, a person could not possess one of the cardinal virtues-prudence, temperance, courage, and justice-without possessing them all. How, they might have asked, could a person who cannot control his or her appetites (or is intemperate) be just or prudent?

Socrates believed that virtue was a matter of understanding, and that once a person understood good and evil, he or she would naturally be prudent, temperate, courageous, and just. Aristotle argued that virtue had this intellectual component, but also included the virtue of character-that is, habits of behavior developed by proper training. Aristotle understood that it was possible, in people with insufficient training, for the passions to overrule reason; thus people might well exhibit some virtues and not others.

Aristotle would have argued that leaders should have "true virtue, where all parts of the soul are pulling in the same direction"; that is, toward the good. Many people still hold to the unity of the virtues, making a case, for example, that a politician who cheats on his wife is not someone who can be trusted with the public's business either.

Also, in the classic tradition, they argue that one of the central tasks of the public sphere is educational-helping shape the souls of the next generation to achieve knowledge and do the right thing. In that context, a public servant must serve as an example of good conduct.

Ethical theorists have struggled with the question of whether a politician might be unethical in one area and still be a good leader.

It is assumed that if leaders are honest, just, and respectful of the truth, countries will be managed honestly, justly, and with due respect for truth and democracy. Such an approach is appealing in its simplicity and makes a comeback today, at a time when politics is seen as highly complex and opportunistic and yet is highly personalised by media obsessed with political leaders.

Puzzled by complexity, and feeling powerless in its face, citizens are also tempted to trust charismatic leaders who present themselves as the "saviour"

or "reformer" of their country. Then come frustration and disillusion, with poor achievement and promises endlessly postponed. Yet an increasing number of voters place their trust in the individual virtue of new leaders rather than teams or programmes. They distrust laws, rules, institutions, compromise, mediation. They downplay policy, management and structural dimensions.

Nothing is more misleading. A fight against corruption that limits itself to individual honesty and moral virtue, for example, is doomed to fail. Without such institutional mechanisms as an independent judiciary, set fines and punishments, whistleblower protection, and fair competition among businesses, it may prove mere lip service, concealing a disastrous reality and opening the doors to even worse and more systematic corruption than before.

What ethical dilemmas are raised by a politician's personal behaviour?

Many difficult ethical dilemmas arise in the relationship between a politician's personal and public life. One is the "youthful indiscretion." If a public official took drugs many years previously, is this germane to his or her current character? Is it a fit topic for public discussion? What if the indiscretion was membership in a whites-only club? A marital infidelity? Some guidelines that may help in determining the "statute of limitations" on such indiscretions would be:

1.   Is the politician still engaging in this behaviour?

2.   Has the politician been hypocritical? For example, the discovery of an affair might be more damning to a politician who has made "family values" a pillar of his or her campaign.

3.   Does his or her behaviour create a conflict of interest with the duties of office?

4.   Is here any discernible effect of the behaviour on the larger moral climate?

Another difficult set of issues is raised by behaviour that may be perfectly moral but still may have potential deleterious impact on the politician's performance. One example is mental illness. In the 1972 election, Thomas Eagleton was running for vice president until his struggle with depression came out in the media, and he was dropped from the ticket. Is it reasonable for the public to evaluate candidates based on their mental health?

The public should also be aware of ways in which a politician may use his or her office to gain advantage in personal life. It may be as petty as the mayor who used to call 911 to get driving directions or as significant as the water and sewer commissioner who coerced sexual favors in return for free service. These acts committed "under color of office" (on the pretext the official has authority that he or she does not really have) do not really raise ethical dilemmas; they are just plain wrong.