

Semester **Second**

Paper **Ethics**

What is Ethics? Discuss its/ nature/definition;

The word ethics is derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’ which means ‘character’ or ‘custom’. It is also defined as principles or standards of human conduct. Ethics is also called moral philosophy. Ethics is practical branch of philosophy that deals with human actions/ behavior. It is mainly concerned with human actions and analysis what is right action and what is wrong action. The ethical philosophers theorize about rightness and wrongness of human action. Thus ethics is the study of what we ought to do and what sort of people we ought to be. Studying ethics help us to know what make our action/behavior right and wrong.

Ethics are the set of moral principles that guide a person’s behavior. Ethics reflect beliefs about what is right, what is wrong, what is just, what is unjust, what is good, and what is bad in terms of human actions/behavior. They serve as a compass to direct how people should behave toward each other, understand and fulfill their obligations to society, and live their lives.

There study four main branches of ethics that include *descriptive ethics*, *normative ethics*, *meta-ethics* and *applied ethics*

Descriptive ethics deals with what people actually believe to be right or wrong and accordingly holds up the human actions *acceptable or not acceptable or punishable* under a custom or law.

Normative Ethics deals with “norms” or set of considerations how one should act. Thus, it’s a *study of “ethical action”* and *sets out the rightness or wrongness* of the actions. It is also called **prescriptive ethics** because it rests on the principles which determine whether an action is right or wrong.

Meta Ethics deals with the origin of the ethical concepts. It does not consider whether an action is good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, it questions – what goodness or rightness or morality itself is?

What is applied ethics?

Applied ethics is a recent development in the field of ethics. It deals with difficult moral questions and controversial moral issues that people actually face in their lives. For examples the moral issues regarding abortion, euthanasia. Thus we can say that applied ethics is a philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular issues in private and public life that are matters of moral judgment. It is thus the attempts to use philosophical methods to identify the morally correct course of action in various fields of human life such as bioethics, for example, is concerned with identifying the correct approach to matters such as euthanasia, or the allocation of scarce health resources, or the use of human embryos in research. Environmental ethics is concerned with questions such as the duties and moral responsibilities of the general public towards environment. Applied ethics is distinguished from normative ethics, which concerns what people should believe to be right and wrong, and from meta-ethics, which concerns the nature of moral statements.

Ethics and polity/ politics/ political ethics

Political ethics (also known as political morality or public ethics) is the practice of making moral judgments about political action and political agents. It covers two areas. The first is the ethics of process (or the ethics of office), which deals with public officials and the methods they use. The second area, the ethics of policy (or ethics and public policy) concerns judgments about policies and laws.

In the other area of political ethics, the key issues are not the conflict between means and ends but the conflicts among the ends themselves. For example, in the question of global justice, the conflict is between the claims of the nation state and citizens on one side and the claims of all citizens of the world. Traditionally, priority has been given to the claims of nations, but in recent years thinkers known as cosmopolitans have pressed the claims of all citizens of the world.

Political ethics deals not mainly with ideal justice but also realizing moral values in democratic societies where citizens disagree about what ideal justice is. In a pluralist society, how if at all can governments justify a policy of progressive taxation, affirmative action, the right to abortion, universal healthcare? Political ethics is also concerned with moral problems raised by the need for political compromise, whistle blowing, civil disobedience, and criminal punishments.

Ethics and politics are closely related to each other. The basic ethical question in political domain is “What should we do?” The verb is plural because politics exists once people belong to groups of any kind, from small voluntary associations to nation-states. Thus political ethics promotes a moral code and standard of actions under certain ethical laws for the benefit of the all citizens without differences.

Unit 2

Theories of Punishment

Three principle theories have been put forward to justify punishment. They are known as the preventive or deterrent theory, the reformatory theory and the retributive theory.

The preventive or retributive theory;

According to this theory, the aim of punishment is to prevent or deter other from committing similar offences/crimes. A criminal is punished to be made an example to prevent others from committing the same crime. This theory justifies capital punishment/ death sentence as an extreme form of punishment because of its deterrent effect. For example, if a man has taken life of another man. As per this theory he ought to deprive of his life.

The reformatory theory;

According to this theory, the aim of the punishment is to educate or reform the offender/criminal himself. Punishment is inflicted on a criminal in order to reform or educate him. In this theory a criminal is punished for his own good, not merely for the good of others. Thus the aim of reformatory theory is reformation or education of the criminal. This theory is supported by criminology on the basis that every crime as a pathological phenomenon a mild form of insanity. Thus criminals as per this theory ought to be cured rather than punished. Reformatory theory is also supported by criminal sociology on the basis that crimes are outcome of unfavorable social conditions or other circumstances. , e.g. theft is because of poverty. But all crimes cannot be viewed from these perspectives some crimes are deliberate violation of moral law that ought to be punished in such a way that may transform an offender rather than encourage his criminal habits. It is important to note that Reformatory theory cannot justify capital punishment, because it holds the hanged man cannot be reformed.

Retributive theory;

According to this theory, punishment is an act of justice. For this theory, punishment is an end in itself, not a means to any end. The primary aim of this punishment is retribution in order to defend the supremacy and authority of moral law and to do justice. The retributive theory sees crime as a behavior or action as opposed to a moral law that is punishable by criminal law. It regards moral law as supreme and those who voluntarily break the moral law should be punished. Hence, for retributive theory, if the criminal is not punished, the moral law loses its dignity and authority. Punishment, for this theory, is the act of restoring the moral order which has been broken by the criminal. Punishment is inflicted on the offender neither for his good nor for that of others. It is demanded by the sense of justice. This theory justifies capital punishment under certain conditions. It holds, right to life as a fundamental right but maintains that if anyone takes away the life of another, justice demands that he should be deprived of his life.

What is Utilitarianism?

Utilitarianism is a moral theory that advocates actions which promote overall happiness or pleasure and rejects actions that cause unhappiness or harm. A utilitarian philosophy, when directed to making social, economic, or political decisions, aims for the betterment of society. "The greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people" is a maxim of utilitarianism. The philosophy is associated with Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, two towering British philosophers, and political thinkers advocate the theory but they differ in their quantitative and qualitative stands on pleasure. For utilitarianism, all actions have utility that promote general happiness and prevent sufferings.

Bentham's gross or quantitative utilitarianism;

Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher, jurist, and social reformer regarded as the founder of modern utilitarianism. Bentham defined as the "fundamental axiom" of his philosophy the principle that "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong. According to Bentham, all pleasures have quantitative standard but quantity takes different forms. It has seven dimensions of value such as;

- 1) Intensity 2) duration 3) proximity 4) certainty 5) purity 'pleasures free from pain' 6) fruitfulness 7) extend 'number of affected'.

As per Bentham's observations, under these dimensions more intense pleasures are preferable to a less intense pleasure. A more durable pleasure is preferable to a less durable pleasure. A proximate pleasure is preferable to remote pleasure. Certain pleasures are preferable to uncertain pleasure. A pleasure has fruitfulness when it gives rise to other pleasure. A pleasure of greater extension is preferable to a less extent pleasure.

Bentham advocates psychological hedonism, for him nature has placed mankind under empire of 'pleasure and pain' humans aim is to seek pleasure and shun pain. The principle of utility subjects everything to these motives. So it's for mankind to point what ought to do or to determine what to do?

In Bentham's hedonistic calculus; an action is right if it gives pleasure or excess of pleasure over pain. And an action is wrong if it gives pain or excess of pain over pleasure.

Mills Utilitarianism;

Mill defines utilitarianism as a theory based on the principle that "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." Mill defines happiness as pleasure and the absence of pain. He argues that pleasure can differ in quality and quantity, and that pleasures that are rooted in one's higher faculties should be weighted more heavily than baser pleasures. Furthermore, Mill argues that people's achievement of goals and ends, such as virtuous living, should be counted as part of their happiness.

Mill argues that utilitarianism coincides with "natural" sentiments that originate from humans' social nature. Therefore, if society were to embrace utilitarianism as an ethic, people would naturally internalize these standards as morally binding. Mill argues that happiness is the sole basis of morality, and that people never desire anything but happiness. He supports this claim by showing that all the other objects of people's desire are either means to happiness, or included in the definition of happiness. Mill explains at length that the sentiment of justice is actually based on utility, and that rights exist only because they are necessary for human happiness.