

BAFSM

BFO 006 : Professional Ethics

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UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Scope of Ethics
- 1.3 History of Ethics
- 1.4 The Methods of Ethics
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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to introduce you to ‘ethics’ or moral philosophy. Ethics is a wide topic. Through the analysis of its various aspects we can learn:

- the nature and the different aspects of ethics
- how ethics developed as a systematic philosophical discipline in the western philosophy
- the methods, different approaches and the division of ethics
- how ethics is related to other sciences
- the relationship between ethics and religion
- the importance of studying ethics in the context of today and the need for being moral.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Etymologically the term “ethics” corresponds to the Greek word “*ethos*” which means character, habit, customs, ways of behaviour, etc. Ethics is also called “moral philosophy”. The word “moral” comes from Latin word “*mores*” which signifies customs, character, behaviour, etc. Thus ethics *may be defined as the systematic study of human actions from the point of view of their rightfulness or*

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wrongfulness, as means for the attainment of the ultimate happiness. It is the reflective study of what is good or bad in that part of human conduct for which humans have some personal responsibility. In simple words ethics refers to what is good and the way to get it, and what is bad and how to avoid it. It refers to what ought to be done to achieve what is good and what ought not to be done to avoid what is evil.

As a philosophical discipline, ethics is the study of the values and guidelines by which we live. It also involves the justification of these values and guidelines. It is not merely following a tradition or custom. Instead it requires analysis and evaluation of these guidelines in light of universal principles. As moral philosophy, ethics is the philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems, and moral judgements.

Ethics is a science in as much as it is a set or body of reasoned truths organised in a logical order and having its specific material and formal objects. It is a rational science in so far as its principles are deduced by human's reason from the objects that concern the free will. Besides it has for its ulterior end the art by which humans may live uprightly or comfortably to right reason. It is a normative/regulative science in as much as it regulates and directs human's life and gives the right orientation to one's existence.

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

Ethics is sometimes distinguished from morality. In such cases, ethics is the explicit philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices while morality refers to the first-order beliefs and practices about good and evil by means of which we guide our behaviour (e.g. music and musicology). However, in most cases they are referred to as having the same meaning.

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

1.2 SCOPE OF ETHICS

Ethics deals with voluntary actions. We can distinguish between human actions and actions of human: human actions are those actions that are done by human consciously, deliberately and in view of an end. Actions of human may not be wilfully, voluntarily, consciously and deliberately done but all the same they are done by human (e.g. sleeping, walking, etc.). It is the intention which makes the difference between human action and action of human. In ethics we deal only with human actions.

1.3 HISTORY OF ETHICS

The first ethical precepts were certainly passed down by word of mouth by parents and elders, but as societies learned to use the written word, they began to set

down their ethical beliefs. These records constitute the first historical evidence of the origins of ethics.

In as much as it is the study of human behaviour, we cannot really trace the history of ethics. However, as a systematic study of human behaviour, we can point out how ethics evolved as a discipline. It is not that we have first a straightforward history of moral concepts and then a separate and secondary history of philosophical comment. To set out to write the history of moral philosophy involves a careful selection from the past of what falls under the heading of moral philosophy as we now conceive it. We have to strike a balance between the danger of a dead antiquarianism, which enjoys the illusion that we can approach the past without preconceptions, and the other of believing that the whole point of the past was that it should culminate with us. However, we can observe a gradual development in the ethical thought from the beginning to our day.

In *R̥ gveda* (It is accepted that *R̥ gveda* is the first example/text of human wisdom; the *vaidika* tradition was oral tradition; pass from one generation to another generation.) we find the concept of *R̥ ta*. *R̥ ta* means the cosmological as well as moral law. We can consider the concept of *R̥ ta* as the first example of human pursuit towards moral philosophy. In Indian philosophy, besides moral codification, there is much debate on moral principles. We can see *Purusartha* as the aim of human life. Human beings cannot know and attain the meaning and the highest goal of life without moral life. For example, *Sādhanachatustaya* (śam, dam etc.) must for the preparation to Moksha (See, Samkara's *advaita Vedāntā*). Buddhism, Jainism and even materialist philosophical tradition *Cārvāka* developed the foundation of Moral Philosophy. *Satya, Ahimsā, Astey, Aparigrah, Brahmacharya* are the basic moral pillars accepted by almost all Indian philosophical schools, but the metaphysics to establish them is different in different schools. Buddhist establishes and interprets them with the help of *anattā* (no-soul, no external reality) metaphysics, Jainism establishes them with the help of *anekāntavāda* and so on.

In the Western Philosophy, the history of ethics can be traced back to the fifth century B.C with the appearance of Socrates. As a philosopher among the Greeks his mission was to awaken his fellow humans to the need for rational criticism of their beliefs and practices. It was the time, when the philosophers began to search for reasons for established modes of conduct. Socrates, in demanding rational grounds for ethical judgements, brought attention to the problem of tracing, the logical relationship between values and facts and thereby created ethical philosophy. Plato's theory of forms could be seen as the first attempt at defending moral realism and offering an objective ground for moral truths. From the *Republic* on through the later dialogues and epistles, Plato constructed a systematic view of nature, God, and human from which one derived one's ethical principles. His main goal in his ethical philosophy was to lead the way toward a vision of the Good. Aristotle differed from Plato in his method of inquiry and his conception of the role of ethical principles in human affairs. While Plato was the fountainhead of religious and idealistic ethics, Aristotle engendered the naturalistic tradition. Aristotle's ethical writings (i.e. the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Politics*) constitute the first systematic investigation into the foundations of ethics. Aristotle's account of the virtues could be seen as one of the first sustained inquiries in normative ethics. It was a clear mixture of Greco-Roman thought with Judaism and elements of other Middle Eastern religions.

The medieval period was dominated by the thoughts of philosophers and theologians like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. The influence of Christianity dominated the ethical scenario. So much so that during this period philosophy and religion were nearly indistinguishable. The rise of Christian philosophy produced a new era of history of ethics. In St. Augustine, the most prominent philosopher of the early medieval period, ethics became a blend of the pursuit of earthly well-being with preparation of the soul for eternal salvation. The next towering figure of medieval philosophy is Thomas Aquinas. He brought about a true reconciliation between Aristotelian science and philosophy with Augustinian theology. Aquinas greatly succeeded in proving the compatibility of Aristotelian naturalism with Christian dogma and constructing a unified view of nature, human, and God.

The social and political changes that characterized the end of the medieval period and the rise of the modern age of industrial democracy gave rise to a new wave of thinking in the ethical field. The development of commerce and industry, the discovery of new regions of the world, the Reformation, the Copernican and Galilean revolutions in science, and the rise of strong secular governments demanded new principles of individual conduct and social organization. Some of the modern philosophers who contributed to the great changes in ethical thinking were Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Benedict de Spinoza, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Nietzsche. Further developments in ethical thinking in the west came with Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Here we are not intending to give a detailed analysis of their contribution to ethics. However, the most influential ethical thought during this period were the Utilitarianism, dominated by British and French Philosophy (e.g. Locke, Hume, Bentham, Stuart Mill) and Idealistic ethics in Germany and Italy (e.g. Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche).

The contemporary ethical scenario is a further complex area of study. The contemporary European ethics in the broadest sense attempts to cover a generous range of philosophies running from phenomenology to theories of communicative action. The conditions of contemporary civilization forced philosophers to seek a genuine ground for ethics and moral life. In much of the English speaking world G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1903) is taken to be the starting point of contemporary ethical theory. Others like Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Levinas, Max Scheler, Franz Brentano and John Dewey too have made significant contributions to ethical thinking in other parts of the world.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on the development of ethics in the western philosophy.

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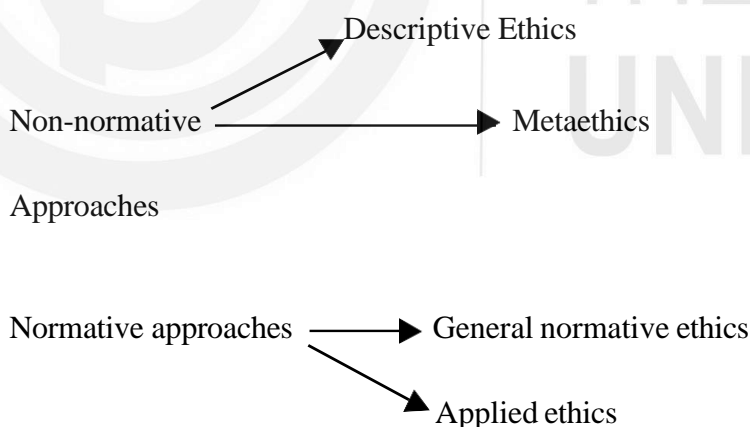
1.4 THE METHODS OF ETHICS

Ethics, as a philosophical discipline, makes use of the methods used in philosophy. Thus in ethics, both the inductive method and deductive methods are used. Deduction is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. Deductive reasoning begins with a universal or general truth and leads to knowledge of a particular instance of it. The classical form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism in which a necessary conclusion is derived from two accepted premises: e.g. All men are mortal, A is a man, and therefore, A is mortal. Induction is a process of arriving at knowledge through experience. Induction begins with the particular and moves to the universal, a generalization that accounts for other examples of the same category or class. For instance, if a number of ravens have been observed, all of which are black, and if no raven has been encountered that is not black, the inferences to the conclusion that the next observed raven will be black or to the general conclusion that all ravens are black, are inductive inferences.

However, in ethics the inductive method (particular to the universal) is generally preferred to the deductive (universal to the particular).

1.5 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ETHICS

There are basically four different approaches to the study of ethics. Tom L. Beauchamp, in his book *Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy* presents them with the following diagram:



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

Among the two non-normative approaches to ethics, *descriptive ethics* describe and sometimes try to explain the moral and ethical practices and beliefs of certain societies and cultures. This is what sociologists, anthropologists, and historians often do in their study and research. In their descriptions they do not make

judgements about the morality of the practices and beliefs but simply describe the practices observed in the different groups or cultures. *Metaethics* focuses on the analysis of the meanings of the central terms used in ethical reasoning and decision-making. It attempts to answer questions of meaning.

1.6 DIVISION OF ETHICS

The whole study of ethics can be divided into General Ethics (nature of moral activity, norm of morality, foundation of morality, end of morality, etc) and Special Ethics (applies the principles of general ethics to the various actions of human activity).

However, when we consider the ethical theories, philosophers today usually divide them into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Metaethics investigates the origin and meaning of ethical concepts. It studies where our ethical principles come from and what they mean. It tries to analyse the underlying principles of ethical values; Normative ethics tries to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. It is a more practical task. It is a search for an ideal litmus test of proper behaviour; applied ethics involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, environmental concerns, homosexuality, and so on. In applied ethics, using the conceptual tools of metaethics and normative ethics, one tries to resolve these controversial issues.

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

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. How ethics uses deductive method?

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2. Write a short note on the division of ethics.

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1.7 ETHICS AND OTHER SCIENCES

In our analysis of the definition and nature of ethics, we have seen that ethics as a science is concerned with an end or ideal or standard. Most sciences, instead, are concerned with certain uniformities of our experience – with the ways in which certain classes of objects (such as rocks or plants) are found to exist, or with the ways in which certain classes of events (such as phenomena of sound or electricity) are found to occur. These sciences have no direct reference to any end that is to be achieved or to any ideal by reference to which the facts are judged.

Ethics is distinguished from the natural sciences, inasmuch as it has a direct reference to an end that human persons desire to attain. Although ethics is sometimes regarded as a practical science, it is not a ‘practical science’ as medicine, engineering or architecture is as much as it is not directed towards the realization of a definite result.

Other sciences		Ethics
Psychology	How a man behaves (descriptive science)	How a man MUST behave (normative science)
Anthropology	Nature of Human Beings and Its Activity	How man’s actions OUGHT to be
Social And Political Sciences	Deals with the organization of man’s social and political life	How man’s social and political life MUST or OUGHT TO BE organized in order to be moral
Economics	Concerned with <i>goods</i> , i.e. with those objects which are the means of satisfying any human want.	Deals with those acts which are the conditions of the attainment of the highest end of life.

1.8 ETHICS AND RELIGION

Ethics has no necessary connection with any particular religion. However, it is sometimes argued that without God or religion, ethics would have no point; and therefore insofar as God or religion is in question, so is ethics. This is evidently unacceptable. Although belief in God or religion can be an added reason for our being moral, it is not necessary to relate it to God or to any religion. The fact that ethics exists in all human societies shows that ethics is a natural phenomenon that arises in the course of the evolution of social, intelligent, long-lived mammals who possess the capacity to recognize each other and to remember the past behaviour of others.

Critics of religion such as Marx and Nietzsche saw religion as a profound source of social conformity, as a means of maintaining the status quo and keeping people confined to their existing social and economic positions. Yet there is another face of religion, one which suggests that religion may be a profoundly liberating force in an individual’s lives and an important force for social change.

1.9 IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING ETHICS

Today, more than ever, the importance of ethics is felt at every sphere of human living. The situation in the present world is characterised by an increasing rate in crime, with no end to such increase in sight. Besides, the power of traditional religions to inspire moral conduct continues to decline. Terrorism, civil wars, industrial pollution, planned obsolescence, misleading advertising, deceptive labelling, crooked insurance adjusting, unfair wages, crime syndicates, illegal gambling, forced prostitution, high jacking, match-fixing... so many are the prevailing trends. Truly, there seems to be hardly a few areas in life remain untouched by growing demoralization. The question that one may ask in this precarious situation is: Are we being sucked into a moral vacuum? Is this our way to the end of ethics?

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

Second, the study of moral philosophy can help us to think better about morality. Moral philosophy can help us to clarify our moral positions when we make judgements. It improves our perspective, and makes it more reflective and better thought out. It can also improve our thinking about specific moral issues. In our everyday life we are confronted with situations in which we have to decide what is the correct course of action and what is to be avoided. Whether we choose to act or to refrain from acting, we are in either case making a choice. Every decision or choice we make we do so for reasons. However, we should agree that some of these reasons are better than the others in judging the rightness of the decision or choice. However, there seems to be a common agreement that we should all strive to do the right thing, to do what is morally acceptable in a given situation or circumstance. However, the issue of disagreement is over the question of what exactly is the right thing to do.

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

Thus, ethical problems confront everybody. Nobody can really get through life without ethics, even if one may not be aware of the ethical principles. Consciously or unconsciously all of us are every day making moral decisions. Whether we are aware of it or not, the fact is that we do have ethical attitudes and are taking moral stances every day of our lives.

1.10 WHY SHOULD WE BE MORAL?

Not few are the people who ask this question: Why should we be moral? Why should we take part in the moral institution of life? Why should we adopt a moral point of view?

In every human person there is a deep desire for good. Human beings by nature tend to be good – *summum bonum*. Each man/woman desires what is best for himself/herself. The ethical principles and moral practices help one to attain what is best. It helps a person to perfect himself/herself as a moral being. Morality has to do more with one's interior self than the practice of some customs or set rules. Viewed from this point, morality is a deep down desire in a human being and is something to do with the very nature of human being. The rational nature of human being makes him/her aware of certain fundamental principles of logical and moral reasoning. This means that there is not only a subjective aspect to every human action but also an objective one that prompts a human person to base himself/herself on certain common principles.

We also find that for the functioning of any society we need certain rules and regulations. The conditions of a satisfactory human life for people living in groups could hardly obtain otherwise (neither a “state of nature” nor a “totalitarian state”). The institutions which are designed to make life easier and better for human being, cannot function without certain moral principles. However, here the question of individual freedom can also come in. How far the society can go on demanding? Should it not respect the freedom of the individual? Is morality made for man or man is made for morality?

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

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a note on the relevance of Ethics.

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1.11 LET US SUM UP

Ethics is the study of human behaviour. It studies human actions and judges them to be right or wrong. As a philosophical discipline, ethics is the study of the values and guidelines by which we live. In ethics we deal only with human actions, those actions done by a human person consciously, deliberately and in view of an end. In human history, the origin of ethics and moral consciousness cannot be easily traced back. It is the result of a long process of rational development and evolution.

Ethics makes use of the methods of induction and deduction. Among the different approaches to the study of ethics, the non-normative ethics (descriptive ethics and metaethics) which examine morality without concern for making judgements as to what is morally right or wrong and normative ethics (general normative ethics and applied ethics) which make judgements as to what is morally right or wrong are the most prominent ones. Although ethics can be regarded as a science it is distinguished from the natural sciences, inasmuch as it has a direct reference to an end that human person desire to attain. Ethics, however, is often said to be the fruit of all the sciences since it ultimately perfects human person, by ordering all other sciences and all things else in respect to an ultimate end that is absolutely free.

1.12 KEY WORDS

‘Ethics’ and ‘Morals’: Ethics is the theory of right and wrong conduct. While ethics involves the values that a person seeks to express in a certain situation, morals refers to the way one sets about achieving this. Ethics is concerned with the principles of human behaviour, morals with the application of these principles, in a particular situation.

‘Moral’, ‘Immoral’ and ‘Amoral’ Actions: An action is said to be moral when it is done deliberately to attain the ultimate happiness. A morally good action has to be a moral action and a human action. An action is moral only if it is done freely and in view of an end.

Immoral : Immoral means ‘not observing a particular known moral rule’. Immoral actions are all those actions that are morally bad actions (e.g. Incest, homicide, etc.). ‘Amoral’ or ‘non-moral’ means ‘not relevant to, or concerned with, morals’. We can note some of the non-moral actions: actions of inanimate objects or events (flood, famine, etc.). They are indifferent actions and are beyond the moral sphere. Reflex actions: they are automatic and immediate (e.g. breathing). Accidental acts, actions of children below the age of reason/ insane persons and actions done under the spell of hypnosis.

Habitual actions: They are moral actions as the habits are formed deliberately or acquired voluntarily. In ethics we are concerned with ‘immoral’ actions but not ‘amoral’ actions.

Human Act: A human act is an act done by a human person deliberately, willingly and freely in view of achieving an end. Morality is spoken of human beings and not of animals. An act to be a moral act, it has to be performed by an individual with reason. Every human act is done in view of an end and is done willingly

with full knowledge and full freedom. Ethics deals with human actions, which help or prevent a person from attaining an end.

End: End of human action can be different. For a believer, in God the ultimate end could be the eternal happiness of man (God and the beatific vision). God is the highest end of man and God is involved in every action of man. Happiness consists in the knowledge and love of God. For a non believer the well-being of humanity could be the end. It could also be an act done for its own sake.

Right and Wrong: Ethics is defined as the science of rightfulness or wrongfulness of conduct. What makes an action right or wrong? The word “right” derives from the Latin “rectus”, meaning ‘straight’ or ‘according to norm’. An action is morally right if it is in conformity with the moral law and morally wrong if it is not in conformity with the moral law.

Good and Bad: The word ‘good’ denotes the attitude of mind and will. An action is morally good if it helps one attain the ultimate end and morally bad if it does not fulfill the purpose. The term ‘good’ is also used to signify something which is itself taken as an end. Thus the *summum bonum*, or supreme good, means the supreme end at which we aim.

Voluntary and Involuntary Actions: Acts are voluntary if they proceed from an internal principle with knowledge of the purpose of the act. An act is free if it proceeds from a self-determining agent. Are all voluntary acts free? Most of the voluntary acts are free except the highest act by which man embraces his Supreme Good.

If knowledge or free choice is totally lacking, the act is involuntary. An involuntary act may be performed without reference to the purpose of the act. It may be done with knowledge against the choice of the will, as when a man emerging from an aesthetic talks foolishly but is unable to control his words. The former emphasizes the strength of emotion with which one is choosing and the latter emphasizes that the choice is free of emotional stress.

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1.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Ethics in the Western Philosophy developed mainly in Greece. Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, was the first one among the Greeks to awaken his fellow men to the need for rational criticism of their beliefs and practices. Plato, in his famous work *Republic* and in other later dialogues and epistles, constructed a systematic view of nature, God, and man from which he derived his ethical principles. Aristotle, the greatest of all Greek philosophers, contributed significantly to a systematic investigation of the foundations ethics through his ethical writings (i.e. the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Politics*).

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Ethics, like any other philosophical discipline, makes use of both the inductive method and deductive method. Deduction is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. It draws a particular conclusion from a universal or general truth. For example: All men are mortal, Ram is a man, and therefore, Ram is mortal. Induction, on the other hand, begins with the particular and moves to the universal. For example: Water at Chennai boils at 100°C. Water at Kochi boils at 100°C. Water at Mumbai boils at 100°C. Therefore water boils at 100°C.

2. The whole study of ethics can be divided into General Ethics and Special Ethics. However, considering the different ethical theories, philosophers divide it into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Metaethics investigates the origin and meaning of ethical concepts. Normative ethics tries to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. Applied ethics involves examining specific controversial issues such as abortion, ecological problems, etc.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. The relevance and need of ethics is felt more than ever in our society today. We can point out at least three reasons why we should study ethics. First, the study of moral philosophy or ethics can deepen our reflection on the ultimate questions of life. It helps a person to look critically at the most important questions concerning our existence here on earth. Second, the study of moral philosophy can help us to think better about morality. It can help us to clarify our moral positions when we make judgments. Third, the study of moral philosophy can help us to sharpen our general thinking processes. It trains our mind to think logically and reasonably and to handle moral issues with greater clarity.

UNIT 2 MORAL ACTION*

Structure

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- 2.2 Definition
- 2.3 Religious Views
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 - 2.3.2 Jainism
 - 2.3.3 Buddhism
 - 2.3.4 Islam
 - 2.3.5 Christianity
- 2.4 Philosophical Views
 - 2.4.1 Teleological Theories
 - 2.4.2 Deontological Theory
 - 2.4.3 Virtue Ethics
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Further Readings and References
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit presents,

- the meaning of moral actions, and
- explains the philosophical implications of moral actions,
- elucidates the differences between moral and non-moral action/sciences.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Being human entails living together or living amongst others. No one likes living in isolation, as this is witnessed from birth itself. A child longs for her mother when she feels that her mother is not around. This longing of a child for her mother exposes the inexplicable bond human beings indefinitely have among each other in a society, as it is an inevitable part of being human. We cannot deny the fact that we live in a society. Each shares a common place and a common understanding among us. By living in a society, we inculcate some kind of concerns like faith, trust, loyalty, etc. that creates a bond among each one of us. Life is all about acting upon these concerns and for this, we are trained to follow certain moral obligations in some way or the other.

The very aspect of being human is morally obligatory because morality is the basic requirement of our life as human adults. But the way through which one

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can analyze the nature of moral obligation is by clarifying what morality is and how are we to act morally? This question opens up some newer dimensions to approach the related questions like, whether all our actions are considered moral or does an action consist of certain elements for which it is called a moral action. If so, then what could be the elements? Therefore, to understand what a “moral action” means or when are we supposed to call particular actions as moral actions we need to investigate both these terms “action” and “moral” separately. For this, let us first try and analyze what an action means and then further move on to investigate the element of morality underlying an action. Nonetheless, to speak of all human action as having a moral dimension should not be taken to mean that all actions are essentially moral actions for there is something profoundly moral that is not true in all species of action.

An action or an act is a movement done or generated by an agent to produce a result. It does not occur like an event but is generated by the agent of the act because of the motive or the intention the agent has. Every action consists of an agent, a motive or will or intention, and a result. For example, “John’s gave alms to the poor” is an action because it did not simply happen like, “The sun rises every day on the east.” In this above example, the first statement is an action because John’s acted out of an intention or a motivation to help the poor and along with that he had the end in his mind, i.e., to make the poor happy. The second statement is an event that happens every day without any failure because of the calculation of time and rotation of the earth. There is no intention behind the rising of the Sun. Only when someone is directed by an intention, a motive, or a will then it results in action because one actively takes part and strives to accomplish its goal. Many moral philosophers discuss that concept of motive, or will, or intention is a peculiar element of action. Without this element, many other moral concepts would not have been possible like that of moral responsibility, moral ownership, etc. This does not entitle us to consider that all actions are moral, but we also cannot deny that all our actions are evaluative to some or the other extent. The attempt to evaluate our actions results in categorizing it under right, wrong or moral, immoral, and amoral actions. This possibility of evaluating an action as right or wrong is by investigating the intention, or motive, or will of that person.

Moral action is any action that proceeds from our deliberate will, intention, or motive. We need not contrast moral with immoral acts whenever a question is put forth, i.e. When can we call a particular action moral? A moral act must be our own act, i.e., it must spring from our own will. If we act upon the direction of others, then there is no moral content in such acts. From the earliest human history, moral actions and religious actions are inescapably joined. In this case it is difficult to judge the morality of action because we cannot penetrate the depth of his mind. Different philosophers have given different theories in order to explain how action has its moral worth- Deontology, Teleology, and Virtue. This unit will explicate all these theories in order to understand how an action is morally worthy and show the possibilities of immoral or moral actions.

2.2 DEFINITION

The term moral is derived from the Latin word *mos* that means custom or habit. From this, it can be derived that when an action is performed deliberately we can

judge them good or bad and this can be further clubbed into moral and immoral actions.

By moral action, it means those actions that are within the moral sphere and are thus objects of moral judgments. These actions are distinguished from non-moral actions, those actions that are devoid of moral quality and scope of moral judgment. In a wider sense the word moral means that in which moral quality, (rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness) is present, i.e., what is right or wrong, good or bad. And an action performed means that which is performed by a rational agent, not through blind impulse or inclination but knowledge and free choice of means and end. The instinctive action is not a moral action because instinctive actions are found most explicitly in lower animals. Instinctive actions cannot be called as good or bad, right or wrong as animals cannot discriminate between right and wrong are non-moral. Actions of psychically uninformed, children, actions done under the spell of hypnotic forces, actions are done under compulsion are non-moral. For some philosophers, every human act in itself is not good but one if done with good intention. Immanuel Kant considers that an action is morally worthy only if done out of good will. A good will is likely to be useful, but it is not good because it is useful. Its value would not be affected by an accidental lack of utility. Moral action is not done for the sake of usefulness or to own any kind of merit. Two men may have done the same thing, but the act of one may be moral, and that of the other contrary. Take, for instance, a man who feeds the poor out of great pity and another feeds with the motive of gaining position or with some such selfish end. Though the action is the same, the act of the one is moral and that of the other non-moral. When we use the word “moral” it is being used in connection with moral goodness for indicating that we aim at goodness of character.

It seems that most philosophers regard the motives of a person as factors that make her action morally good or bad. Apparently, some of them think that motives are the only relevant factors for an action’s morality. It is obvious that motives are important for the morality of an action but not necessarily. If a person spends money to help the poor, her motivation tends to make her action morally good, and we recognize her to be a morally good person. But if she spends the money only because she regards it as a lucrative investment, her action may be prudent, but it would not be morally praiseworthy. But motive and intention of an action cannot be distinguished in thought but practice. For instance, if A puts poison into B’s coffee with the intention to kill him, his motive may have been the hope to inherit B’s wealth. Electra intentionally killed an old woman but unintentionally her mother. If she had killed her mother intentionally, we would judge his deplorable action differently. Actions can be morally bad even if motives are good. Suppose that a person A does something because she thinks it will make B happy. She is however aware that her action will harm C and D. Here, A is only concerned about B and is indifferent to C and D. A is, therefore, acting from a good motive (she wishes to make B happy), but what she does is nevertheless not morally good. The reason for this is not her motive but lack of certain other motives. Due to lack of some motives made the action in the above example bad or else it would have been good. This points out to the idea that many actions are morally bad even when their motives are not blameworthy. Take the case of a thief. A boy steals Rs 500 from the purse of a rich woman, but the woman shouts out to the crowd that he

has stolen Rs 2000 from her. On being caught by the boy, he returns the Rs 500 to a woman. The boy says that due to lack of Rs 500 he is unable to consult the doctor because the doctor denies treating her without the payment. In this case, the boy's motive was to cure his mother and release her from pain, but this action is morally bad because he would gain something only by taking away someone else's property. He is not motivated by his knowledge that it harms the rich woman. Morality of an action is not only determined by its intention, but unintentional actions could also be blameworthy. The goodness of an action depends on how a person has been trained throughout life. When, for example, toddlers are taught to avoid hurting others. Later, many children begin to regularly say "please" and "thank you." These do not come pre-programmed but are inculcated through external training.

What sets moral action apart from other species of action? How do we know that the action we perform is a moral one? Essentially, moral action is an action of moral value such that one's moral consciousness comes to work as one is called to make a moral response. Moral action is not a one-time but is an ongoing, continuous process. It can be said that by choosing the good, we become good. By choosing to tell the truth, one becomes honest like the case of the boy who stole Rs 500. However, honesty exhibited once does not make one honest to be such, one has to choose consistently to be honest. It may sound straightforward and formulaic, but actual moral action can be far more complex. Hence, becoming good, as the word "becoming" itself connotes, involves a constant struggle. Every action demands thinking, and decision-making and every moral action calls for rational deliberation and affirmation of our humanity. Moral action touches on one's moral ideals. Our moral ideals pertain to what is believed to constitute a life that is worthy of humans which are a product of generations of shaping via our tradition and which come to the fore as summoned by action. Actions which proceed from natural programming of the body such as instinctive, thoughtless movements, mannerism, and reflex actions are not considered to be properly moral actions as they happen outside the control of the human agent. Likewise, any action is done by an individual out of honest ignorance hardly fits in the criteria of moral action. Moral actions are actions that proceed from the deliberate free will of human beings. Every individual human action that proceeds from deliberate reason must be good or bad. Moral actions are those actions that properly belong to conscious, rational, free human beings. Let us highlight the key elements of moral actions:

- (1) Moral actions are done by an agent with knowledge or consciousness i.e. voluntariness as opposed to actions that are out of ignorance. Knowledge here pertains to knowledge of facts surrounding or characterizing the situation, the choices available and also the possible consequences of the choices. For instance, a person unaware that her friend is allergic to onions serves her an onion cutlet. Had she known about her allergy, she could have served a cutlet with a different filling. Due to ignorance of his friend's medical state cancels out moral responsibility except when such ignorance is totally beyond remedy.
- (2) Moral actions involve freedom.

Moral action is any act done by mostly accepted and deemed good values in any society where the act is being performed. Every society has some values, some ground rules, which determine whether something is good, or bad which is the

result of numerous factors like history, culture, dominant religion, economical conditions, level of education and so on. Also with time values keep changing. The community or society we live in sets the level of morality. This also varies with different cultures and the way people respond depending on nature and other humans.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on Moral Action.

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2. How is a moral action different from a non-moral action?

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2.3 RELIGIOUS VIEWS

The religious experience provides a framework within which moral behavior is a part. From the religious point of view, a moral action is one that helps the human being to attain the ultimate end, i.e., the Supreme good, which is God. Consequently, those acts are morally good for a human that brings her nearer to God, the ultimate end of one’s existence. We shall discuss moral action according to religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Christianity.

2.3.1 HINDUISM

The concept of moral action has been depicted and presented in the most famous scripture- The *Bhagavad Gita*. The sumnon bonum of *Gita* is realization of God or the consolidation of society (*loksamgraha*). The means for the realization of the ultimate end are following certain duties known as *Varña Ashram*, *Nitya dharma*, and *Naimittika dharma* etc. There are two underlying principles in Hinduism –Dharma, and Karma that explain moral thought and action. The central teaching of *Bhagavad Gita* is *Nishkam Karma*. This, however, does not mean disinterested action as it is interpreted as an action not for the fulfillment of any selfish desire but rather for social welfare or with intention of realization of God. It means that the allocated work done without expectations, motives or thinking about its outcomes will purify one’s mind and gradually makes an individual fit to see the value of reason and the benefits of renouncing the action itself. God controls the results of actions, but in order to become a dynamic instrument of

divine action after understanding this order and complete self-submission to God, it is important to act with determination. True self-realization lies in self-surrender. In Hinduism, *Dharma* is one of the all-encompassing terms; it can mean religion, law, duty, order, morality, justice. *Dharma* fundamentally underlies conceptions of morality in Hinduism. To act out of duty is, in essence, to act appropriately, what is appropriate is determined by the content in which the action is to be performed and who is performing it. *Karma* is intimately associated with *dharma* in this regard. Positive actions produce positive effects; negative actions produce negative effects. To act dharmically is to act in karmically positive manner, when one acts dharmically only then one produces positive karma.

2.3.2 JAINISM

Jainism emphasizes on the necessity of self-effort to move the soul towards divine consciousness and liberation. Any soul that has conquered its own inner enemies is prescribed five moral principles to be observed, i.e., *Pancha Vratas- Ahimsa, Satya, Asetya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha*. The main teaching of Jainism is that every soul is the architect of its own life, here or hereafter. Like Buddhists, Hindus, Jainas believe that good conduct leads to better circumstances in life and bad conduct leads to worse. Jainism maintains that there are triple gems (right view, right knowledge and right conduct) that provide the way to realization of correct action. However, since they conceive Karma to be a material substance that draws the soul back to its body, all actions both good or bad lead to rebirth in the body. No action can help a person achieve liberation from rebirth. For Jainism, the moral life is one which is free from all attachments to worldly things, including attachment to sensual enjoyment. It encourages spiritual development through cultivation of one's own personal wisdom and reliance on self-control.

2.3.3 BUDDHISM

For Buddhism, a moral action is one which is devoid of suffering as it places great emphasis on the sanctity of life. The four noble truths of Buddhism are the guiding principles of moral thought and action, particularly as expressed in the Eightfold path. The motivation for following the noble truths is not to be good per se but to facilitate the realization the Buddhists call Enlightenment. The eightfold path is a set of guidelines for acceptable or correct behavior. The initial precept is non-injury or non-violence to all living creatures. The eight items in the eightfold path are often divided into three categories: Right view, Right conduct and Right practice. Within the Right view, there are two items (1) Right understanding and (2) Right thought. In Right conduct, there are (3) Right speech (4) Right action (5) Right livelihood. In Right practice there are (6) Right effort (7) Right Mindfulness (8) Right concentration. This eight fold path originally directs an agent towards the ultimate goal of enlightenment which also is behavioral guidelines. It never asks for blind faith, it never seeks to promote learning a process of self-discovery. For Buddhism, moral action is one, which holds respect, generosity, self-control, honesty, and compassion.

2.3.4 ISLAM

Islamic ethical thinking begins from the premise that the most fundamental relationship in the life of human beings is their relationship with God. For Islam, a moral action is one when derived from one of the five categories: the obligatory,

the prohibited, the superogatory, the disfavored, and the indifferent. One of the most important aspects of a Muslim’s life is to have high moral standards. The view point of Islam is that the universe is the creation of God and everything is functioning under his command. Unlike the commonly held beliefs that man is evil by nature, Islam hopes that man is born with a morally good nature that responds to faith and ethical values. Over time, it may get corrupted due to temptations and man’s inability to exercise control over desires. For human’s conduct to be moral as per Islam, there are two conditions which must be fulfilled: one’s intention must be good and one’s action must be according to what God has instructed. For example, if a wrong deed was done with good intentions that ultimately produced good outcome, it cannot be termed as moral. If the intentions were wrong to begin with and the outcome was accidentally good, there is no question of moral behavior. Good intentions and good deeds must go hand in hand.

2.3.5 CHRISTIANITY

For Christianity, life should be a worship of God, which is expressed not only in rituals and prayers but also upon how a Christian lives. In his or her seeking to live a moral life, a Christian tries to obey the rules for his or her behavior that have been decreed by God and recorded in the *Bible*. For Christianity, morality is derived from God and since God is a benevolent one so whatever he commands is morally good. God is the standard that we have a reference. Moral action is performed by sincere confession of one’s sin as such confession demonstrates one’s acceptance of God’s will and love. Actions are morally good because God commands them and what God commands is morally good because it was He commanded it.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
- b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Write a short note on the Buddhism and Jainism’s outlook on moral action.

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2.4 PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

The philosophical views on moral action are explicated through the different moral theories that are structured by different philosophers. This unit attempts to explain how the different moral theorists try to understand what a moral action is? The ultimate concern of a moral theory is to guide in making the decisions and judgments relating to various actions viz. moral or non-moral. Moral theories are broadly classified into three: Teleological theory, Deontological theory and Virtue theory. All these moral theories have presented their moral standards from

different angles. Let us deliberate these theories with their respective principles of actions separately.

2.4.1 Teleological Theories

The word teleology is derived from the Greek word *telos* which means goal or purpose. Teleology is the study of goals, ends, and purposes. It locates moral goodness in the consequence of our behavior and not the behavior itself. In other words, an action is morally right or good if the consequence of that action is more favorable than unfavorable. According to the teleological theorists, what is morally right, wrong, or obligatory is what produces good results. Nothing is intrinsically good or bad. Teleological theories are based on reflective desires, i.e., pleasure, happiness and the good of the individual. These reflective desires of the individual are the ends and the actions should be the prime focus of ethical deliberation. The rightness and wrongness of an action are based on the goodness and badness of their consequences. According to teleological moral theory, all rational human actions are teleological in the sense that we reason about the means of achieving certain ends. For instance, the wrongness of telling a lie or intentionally harming someone depends on whether these actions produce good or bad results. A lie, if it prevents suffering might by consequentialists be the right thing to do. Moral behavior is goal-directed so from a teleological point of view, human behavior is neither right nor wrong in itself. However, from the teleological perspective, motives really have nothing to do with rightness or wrongness of the act. What matters is what might happen as a consequence of those actions in any given context. Teleological moral theories must somehow connect the consequences of human behavior to the foundational moral concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, and moral and immoral. The hallmark of most teleological moral theories is that they identify these moral concepts with pleasure and pain or happiness and unhappiness. Hence, moral actions are good, right, or moral in so far as they lead to pleasurable consequences and bad, wrong or immoral if they lead to the painful consequences. There are three types of teleological theories-

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

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

Ethical Utilitarianism- an action is morally right if the consequences of the action are more favorable than unfavorable to everyone. Classical or Ethical Utilitarianism is one of the main theories brought under the rubric of teleological ethics. This is further broken into two main components- a theory of value and a theory of right action. Firstly, it endorses Hedonism as a theory of value. Hedonism means happiness or pleasure as the supreme end of life. Secondly, it endorses consequentialism as a theory of right action. Jeremy Bentham and J.S Mill are the main exponents of this theory. They developed the position that it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that measures the rightness and wrongness of

an act. Mill formulates the principle of utility that he regards as a fundamental moral principle. By principle of utility he means the principle which approves or disapproves of every action according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or dismiss happiness of the party whose interest is in question.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the arguments forwarded by teleological theory on moral action?

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2.4.2 Deontological Theory

For deontologists a moral action is essentially about following a set of rules that forbid or require certain actions. These rules specify actions that are right or wrong about the rule in the question. The word deontology is derived from the Greek word *deon* and *logos* which means duty and study, so deontology is the study of duty. Deontological theorists hold that moral goodness has nothing to do with generating pleasure, happiness, and consequences. The wrongness of an action is intrinsic or resides in the kind of action that is rather than the consequences it brings about. Deontologists equate right or wrong actions with obedience or disobedience to moral laws. They consider rightness or wrongness as intrinsic to certain types of actions. They tend to identify the rightness and wrongness of an action with fixed principles of conduct. It judges the morality of an action upon the intrinsic value of the act. For deontologists what makes a choice right is its conformity with the moral norm. Such moral norms are to be obeyed by each moral agent. In this sense, for such deontologists, the right is said to have priority over the good. Certain actions ought to be right even if they do not produce good consequences for the rightness of such actions consists of certain norms. Deontological theories are by definition duty-based. That is to say that morality consists in the fulfillment of moral obligations and duties. Duties are further associated with obeying absolute moral rules. Human beings are morally required to do certain acts to uphold a rule or law. The rightness or wrongness of moral rule is determined independently of its consequences or happiness.

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

- (1) The first formulation- Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

- (2) The second formulation- Act as to treat humanity, both in your person and in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as a means.
- (3) The third formulation-Every rational being must so act as if he were through this maxim, always legislating members in the universal kingdom of ends.

Our duties are to be understood regarding respecting this imperative. Kant considered that the imperative should not be hypothetical, as it cannot be derived from the consideration of any end outside of the will of the individual. The categorical imperative has no reference to the external ends but in the right direction of the will itself. Human beings must have access to the moral truth to be responsible agents at all. Throughout the *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that a moral action is one that is for the sake of the moral law. There is no particular content in the moral law so it cannot tell us what the matter or content of our actions ought to be but can only instruct us. For instance, we are obliged to keep our promises even when keeping them results in less good. Kant believed that morality was *a priori* and investigating moral we need to look at pure practical reason. For him, the reason is what makes us capable of morality, to begin with. No conduct is regarded can be regarded as truly virtuous which rests on feeling but reason. Kantian morality commands that we take the right attitude in action, not just the performance of the right act. An act is morally good for him if it proceeds from a subjective principle or maxim that is fit to be a universal law. Kant, unlike Mill, believed that certain types of actions (murder, theft, and lying) were prohibited even if it brings more happiness than the alternative.

Check Your Progress IV

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer
 b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is a moral action, according to Immanuel Kant?

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2.4.3 Virtue Ethics

For Virtue ethicists, an action is moral or virtuous if it is performed through practical deliberation and not out of ignorance. Morality stems from the identity or character of the individual rather than being a reflection of the action of the individual. Aristotle has been the main source of inspiration of virtue ethics. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he urged that the best life of a human is *eudemonia* that occupies the exercise of virtues or excellences. He says that there is nothing

about having a life except the exercise of virtues. This is a concept fostered by Stoics also. Virtue ethics describes the character of a moral agent as a driving force for the ethical behavior rather than rules those set by Kant. Virtue is the primary mode of evaluation as opposed to the act evaluates such as right and wrong. Virtue is the habit or quality that allows the bearer to succeed at his or her or its purpose. The virtue of a knife, for example, is the sharpness and that of a racehorse is speed. Thus, to identify the virtues for human beings, one must have an account of what human purpose is. According to Aristotle, virtue is seen as a quality that leads to *eudemonia* or well-being. He categorized virtue as moral and intellectual.

A virtue ethicist would, however, focus less on lying in any particular instance and instead consider one's character and moral behavior, the decision to tell a lie or not to tell a lie. It refers to the collection of normative acts that emphasize being rather than doing. A virtue ethicists philosopher will identify virtues, desirable characteristics that the moral or virtuous person embodies. Possessing these virtues is what makes one moral and one's actions are a mere reflection of one's inner morality. An action cannot be used as a demarcation of morality because a virtue encompasses more than just a simple selection of action. Instead, it is about the way of being that would cause the person exhibiting the virtue to make a certain virtuous choice consistently in each situation. The agent chooses virtue and chooses to perform the virtuous action but choosing virtuous act the agent in choosing exhibits practical wisdom, knowledge of what he is doing and why it is good. This entails that the virtuous agent cannot act out of ignorance. Otherwise, he would not be genuinely choosing and would not be exhibiting practical wisdom. Take for instance that there are two individuals Karb and Barb- Karb is a naturally good person who enjoys helping others-she isn't too bright, but her nature is such that she ends up helping people simply out of the kindness of heart. This kindness on his part is not cultivated; it is just a part of her personality, her basic nature. Barb, on the other hand, is also a kind of person but someone who has worked at it by developing good habits. She is good because she chose to be; she rationally and effectively endorsed virtue and set out on a path to be virtuous. She might have been helped along by having good parents who instilled good values, but still, the choice was hers to make when she grew up. She was able to rationally reflect on her character and make decisions about what to endorse. In Aristotle's view, Karb is someone who has natural goodness but no true virtue. Barb, on the other hand, has a genuine virtue because she has chosen virtue: she displayed practical wisdom. Karb has not and so her goodness in a way is accidental because it is operating by a kind of mindless instinct. For Aristotle, a virtuous person is a person who functions harmoniously- his desires and emotions do not conflict with what he knows to be right.

David Hume also wrote on virtue ethics. He views virtues as mental qualities as pleasing: they are pleased because they are conducive to the social utility in some respect. Thus, he places no heavy psychological requirements on virtue. Having virtue means that one has a pleasing quality. The virtuous person does not need to have wisdom or intelligence, though they would count as intellectual virtues because they are pleasing and useful qualities. Hume's account does depend on a certain view of human nature. We are the sorts of creatures moved by feelings of sympathy for others, as well as concern for ourselves. He believed that people are motivated by self-interest but that they are also motivated by love and sympathy

for others. This sympathy forms the basis for morality. The pain of another is bad, and when I see this, I react sympathetically to the person. For instance, I would probably feel pity for a person if I see him being tortured. He said that when we make moral evaluations what we are most concerned about are the motives. The primary focus of moral evaluation is the internal states, the agent associated with virtue or having good character traits.

Check Your Progress V

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the primary focus of moral evaluation, according to David Hume?

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

Morality is, therefore, an institution of human life under which questions such as, ‘which conduct is right and which one is wrong?’, ‘which character is good and which one is bad?’ are raised and answered. However, Morality is synonymous with moral goodness or moral rightness. To say that some act is moral is not to say in this sense that it may be judged either as right or wrong, But to say that it is right. The essence of morality consists in promoting the welfare of others, or in practicing non-violence or control of senses, etc. Being moral does not simply mean being right or being of a good conduct and character but also being a moral agent whose action or actions may be judged either right or wrong .The concept of moral action is different according to both religious and philosophical views as described above. Many thinkers have explained the content of morality in an action through different formulations. Their formulations have been represented in form of theories like, Deontology, Teleology and Virtue ethics.

2.6 KEY WORDS

Morality : Morality is a set of customs and habits that shape how we think about how we should live or about what is a good human life.

Action : It is a deliberative movement performed by a human agent.

Intention : it is more than a mere wish, a conspicuous change that we aim to bring.

2.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERNCES

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to check your progress I

1. Moral action is an action that is acted through one's will or intention to accomplish one's deliberative goals. An act is a moral one when acted through one's reasoning capability. Considering that, human beings are rational agents so their actions are always evaluative since not every human action can be moral. Therefore, all human actions are evaluated as either morally good or bad and right or wrong. When the word "moral action" is used, it is presented in connection with moral goodness for indicating that we aim at goodness of the character.

Two elements explain the nature of a moral action. They are- Knowledge or Voluntariness and Freedom.

2. Amoral action is an action of moral value such that one's moral consciousness comes to work to make a moral response. A non-moral action is one that is devoid of moral quality and scope of moral judgment. Immoral action is one that is the violation of the accepted principles of right and wrong of a given society.

Answers to check your progress II

1. The Buddhists and the Jaina outlook on the question of moral action seem more or less similar. The eight-fold path and the triple gems are set of guidelines for acceptable or correct behavior. Actions are good or bad not in terms of the external consequences they produce, but the inner motive that prompts them. For them, the only consequence does not determine the rightness or wrongness of action.

Answers to check your progress III

1. According to teleological theory, what is morally right, wrong, or obligatory is what produces good results. Nothing is intrinsically good or bad. Moral behavior is goal-directed so from a teleological point of view, human behavior is neither right nor wrong in itself. However, from the teleological perspective, motives really have nothing to do with rightness or wrongness of the act. There are three different teleological theories; Ethical egoism, Ethical altruism, and Ethical Utilitarianism.

Answers to check your progress IV

1. Immanuel Kant holds that moral goodness has nothing to do with generating pleasure, happiness, and consequences. The wrongness of an action is intrinsic or resides in the kind of action that is rather than the consequences it brings about. For Kant, an action can have moral worth if and only if it is done from duty. His notion of acting from duty is in standard manner understood as doing what is right through the moral law. Whether a course of action is morally permissible will depend on whether or not it conforms to moral law i.e. Categorical Imperative.

Answers to check your progress V

1. According to David Hume, the primary focus of moral evaluation is the internal states, the agent associated with virtue or having good character traits. He believed that the basis of morality is that people are motivated by self-interest but that they are also motivated by love and sympathy for others.

UNIT 3 VIRTUES AND VICES*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Meaning of Virtue
- 3.3 Socrates: Virtue is Knowledge
- 3.4 Plato's Four Cardinal Virtues
- 3.5 Aristotle's Conception of Virtue
- 3.6 Virtues in Hinduism
- 3.7 Virtues in Islam
- 3.8 Vices
 - 3.8.1 The Christian Vices
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Key Words
- 3.11 Further Readings and References
- 3.12 Answers to Check your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we are going to study Virtues and Vices from an ethical point of view. After understanding the meaning of virtue, we make an effort to grasp the Socratic, Platonic and the Aristotelian conception of virtue. Then we shall attempt to see virtues in Hinduism and Islam. By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- grasp the meaning of virtue
- understand the virtues according to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle the three main Greek Philosophers
- appreciate the virtues in Hinduism and Islam

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Individuals and as groups, human beings search for happiness. The means to attain this goal was discovered by the Greeks to be in the cultivation of virtue. In Indian philosophies also there are qualities contributing to human well-being; however, quite often instead of focusing on human happiness as such, Indian concepts of virtue are intertwined with the concept of salvation and afterlife. Something similar happened in Western thought after Greek philosophy met the Christian Revelation. In the present unit however we shall not be dealing specifically with the religious and theological links but only with those elements that fall under the general purview and more or less universal survey of human reason.

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3.2 MEANING OF VIRTUE

The Greek term for virtue is *arête* which was used for excellence of any kind. But generally the excellence referred to is an excellence belonging to a human being so that the virtues may be described as the forms of human excellence. ‘Virtue’ which comes from the Latin *virtus* means moral excellence. A virtue is a character trait or quality valued as being good. Personal virtues are characteristics valued as promoting individual and collective well-being, and thus good by definition. The opposite of virtue is vice. In ethics, ‘virtue’ is used with two somewhat different meanings. (a) A virtue is a quality of character – a disposition to do what is right in a particular direction, or to perform one of the more universal duties. (b) A virtue is also a habit of action corresponding to the quality of character or disposition. We may refer to the honesty of a human person, or to the honesty of his dealings equally as virtues.

Virtues can be placed into a broader context of values. Each individual has a core of underlying values that contribute to our system of beliefs, ideas and/or opinions. Integrity in the application of a value ensures its continuity and this continuity separates a value from beliefs, opinion and ideas. In this context a value (e.g., Truth or Equality or Creed) is the core from which we operate or react. Societies have values that are shared among many of the participants in that culture. An individual’s values typically are largely, but not entirely, in agreement with their culture’s values. Individual virtues can be grouped into one of four categories of values: Ethics (virtue - vice, good - bad, moral - immoral - amoral, right - wrong, permissible - impermissible) Aesthetics (beautiful, ugly, unbalanced, pleasing) Doctrinal (political, ideological, religious or social beliefs and values) Innate/Inborn (inborn values such as reproduction and survival).

Laird has divided virtues into three classes:

- (a) There are virtues of what he calls, ‘the righteous quality’. A virtue of this kind consists in the habit of performing a duty of a particular kind and in the quality of character which leads to this kind of action. The only distinction that can be made between virtuous conduct of this kind and right conduct is that the term ‘virtuous conduct’ emphasizes the habitual performance of what is right.
- (b) There are virtues of the ‘requisite quality’. These are necessary to a virtuous character, but are also found in bad characters, and indeed may tend to increase the wickedness of the bad. Such virtues include prudence and perseverance. The villain who is persevering in his villainy is a worse man than the villain who is hesitant.
- (c) There are virtues of the ‘generous quality’. These are chiefly of an emotional kind and they add something not strictly definable, but of the nature of beauty or of moral intrinsic value, to actions that are in other respects right. They sometimes even give a strange quality of nobility to conduct that is morally wrong. We find this in the adventurous courage sometimes attributed to a brigand chief and in the loyalty of often shown to people utterly unworthy of that loyalty. Virtues of this kind seem to have some intrinsic value; this at least is suggested by the value that we assign to these virtues in the characters of people where no good result follows from the presence of the virtue in their actions.

Of the three classes, virtues of the ‘righteous quality’ are the most important in the moral life. Virtues of the ‘requisite quality’ are clearly subordinate to the virtues of the ‘righteous quality’, for they are of value only when they accompany such virtues. Virtues of the ‘generous quality’ depend more on the natural endowments than the other two classes do, and are hardly to be acquired merely by the conscientious doing of one’s duty. Virtues of this quality have an appeal that is perhaps more aesthetic than moral, but they do give to goodness a colour and an adventurous atmosphere which are sometimes sadly lacking in those whose virtues are merely of the righteous quality.

3.3 SOCRATES: VIRTUE IS KNOWLEDGE

The core of Socrates’ ethics is the concept of virtue. Virtue, according to Socrates, is the deepest and most basic property of man. This virtue is *knowledge*. If on the other hand knowledge embraces everything that is good, we shall be right to suspect that virtue is knowledge.” If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative ‘know yourself’. ‘Know yourself’ means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge humans gain possession of oneself whereby one becomes one’s own master.

According to Socrates virtue is the highest aim and greatest good one has to seek in life. He also insisted that if it is to be the highest aim and the greatest good it must have universal consistency and be the same for all. Now, what is universally consistent and the same for all is knowledge which is obtained through concept by the use of reason common in all. *The relation between virtue and knowledge is inseparable. For, Socrates thinks that health, wealth, beauty, courage, temperance etc., which are customarily considered to be various forms of good, are good only if they are guided by wisdom; if guided by folly they could be considered forms of evil.*

Ethics, according to Socrates, has yet another dimension. It does not stop at mere acquisition of the knowledge of the ideas of good. The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory. For Socrates this is the reason for believing that “no one does wrong knowingly” and “that knowledge is virtue.”

Socrates says that virtue or goodness is one, although practices differently in different forms of good. In Plato’s *Protagoras* Socrates says that although wisdom, temperance, courage, justice and holiness are the principal forms of virtue, there is one single reality which underlies them all. Yet on another occasion, in Plato’s *Meno*, we find Socrates looking for one virtue which permeates all other virtues.

Socrates explained this by means of an example of a healthy body. According to him all kinds of bodily excellence follow from one single health of the body, similarly, all kinds of virtue follow from the health of the soul. What is meant by the health of the soul? The soul has different functions. The health of the soul follows from orderly arrangement of these different functions. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, we see Socrates saying that the functions of the soul are reasoning, temper, and desire. The function of reasoning aims at attaining wisdom, temper means courage, and desire is soberness. The health of the souls depends on the organized relation

that these functions hold to each other. An orderly arrangement of these functions is something like the following. Wisdom commands and temper assists in the execution of these commands, while desire furnishes the material basis for the actualization of these commands. The aim of the oneness or unity of virtue is the ultimate happiness of the individual. “A successful functioning of the harmonious activities under the regulation of reason yields happiness.” Thus the Socratic notion of virtue as one means is “the self of a good man is an organic unity of all its functions.”

The Socratic notion of virtue as one leads us finally to conclude that there is one Idea of the Good which underlies all the ethical activities of man which are intrinsically good. Socrates speaks in the *Republic* of Plato that in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this.

Check your progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
 b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the meaning of virtue?

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2. Explain the Socratic dictum “Virtue is Knowledge”.

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3.4 PLATO’S FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES

The four virtues which Plato described in the *Republic* were later called the *cardinal* virtues. The word ‘cardinal’ is a derivative of the Latin word ‘cardo’, meaning a hinge, and the cardinal virtues are the virtues by which the moral life is supported as a door is supported by its hinges.

Plato describes the four cardinal virtues in *The Republic*:

- Wisdom* (calculative) - see the whole
Courage (spirited) - preserve the whole

<i>Moderation</i> (appetitive)	- serve the whole
<i>Justice</i> (founding/ preserving virtue)	- “mind your own business” i.e. “tend to your soul”/”know yourself”

Plato defines how an individual can attain these virtues: *Wisdom* comes from exercising reason; *courage* from exercising emotions or spirit; *moderation* (sometimes “temperance”) from allowing reason to overrule desires; and from these *justice* ensues, a state in which all elements of the mind are in concord with one another. Justice is described by Plato to be the founding and preserving virtue because only once someone understands justice, can he or she gain the other three virtues, and once someone possesses all four virtues, it is justice that keeps it all together.

3.5 ARISTOTLE’S CONCEPTION OF VIRTUE

Aristotle said that the moral end is ‘eudaimonia’, which may be translated as happiness, and he said that ‘eudaimonia’ consisted in the exercise of a person’s soul in accordance with virtue. To put it in Aristotle’s own terminology, ‘eudaimonia’ is the *end* or what was later called the final cause of the moral life, while virtue is what was later called the *form* or the *formal cause* of the moral life. The *form* is analogous to the conception of his picture in the mind of an artist which guides and limits one’s activity as one works, and which gives shape to one’s creation. Aristotle defined virtue as a habit of choice, the characteristic of which lies in the observation of the mean or of moderation, as it is determined by reason or as the practically prudent person would determine it.

Aristotle regarded virtue as primarily a habit of action, and so it was with him only secondarily a quality of character. Virtue is not a mere habit, but a habit of choice. Aristotle defined choice as the deliberate desire of things in our power after consideration of them by the intellect. Choice accordingly is in some sense free for it deals with things in our own power, and it is when such a deliberate choice is repeated that it becomes the habit of action which we call a virtue. The choice, for example, of doing what is right in the face of pain becomes, when habitual, the virtue of courage. The mere doing of single good actions may be accidental or merely impulsive; it is the habitual choice that counts as virtue.

The point in Aristotle’s definition which has been most discussed is his notion of the mean or middle course. A virtue is regarded as if it were a middle position between two vices; courage for example, is the middle position between rashness and cowardice, and liberality is the middle position between extravagance and miserliness. The place of the mean relative to the vices at the extremes depends on the circumstances of each individual. A soldier’s courage should be nearer to rashness than that of a statesman, for it is his business to take risks which would be criminal on the part of a statesman to take. This conception is obviously in agreement with the Greek emphasis on proportion and harmony in art, as expressed in the maxim ‘Nothing too much’ or virtue lies in the middle.

Check your progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Explain the four Cardinal virtues according to Plato.

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2. Explain Aristotle’s conception of virtue.

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3.6 VIRTUES IN HINDUISM

Hinduism, or has pivotal virtues that everyone keeping the Dharma is asked to follow. For they are distinct qualities of *manus.ya* (humankind), that allow one to be in the mode of goodness. There are three modes of material nature (*guna*), as described in the Vedas and other Indian Scriptures (e.g. *sām' khyakārikā*, *carakasa m̄hitā*): *Sattva* (goodness, creation, stillness, intelligence), *Rajas* (passion, maintenance, energy, activity), and *Tamas* (ignorance, restraint, inertia, destruction). Every person harbours a mixture of these modes in varying degrees. A person in the mode of *Sattva* has that mode in prominence in one’s nature, which one obtains by following the virtues of *Dharma*.

The modes of *Sattva* are the following: **Altruism:** Selfless Service to all humanity; **Restraint and Moderation:** This is having restraint and moderation in all things. Sexual relations, eating, and other pleasurable activities should be kept in moderation. It depends on the sect and belief system, some people believe this means celibacy. While others believe in walking the golden path of moderation, i.e. not too far to the side of forceful control and total abandon of human pleasures, but also not too far to the side of total indulgence and total abandonment for moderation. **Honesty:** One is required to be honest with oneself, honest to the family, friends, and all of humanity. **Cleanliness:** Outer cleanliness is to be cultivated for good health and hygiene; inner cleanliness is cultivated through devotion to god, selflessness, non-violence and all the other virtues; which is maintained by refraining from intoxicants. Protection and reverence for the Earth. **Universality:** Showing tolerance and respect for everyone, everything and the way of the Universe. **Peace:** One must cultivate a peaceful manner in order to benefit oneself and those around him. Non-

Violence/Ahimsa: This means not killing, or not being violent in any way to any life form or sentient being. This is why those who practice this Dharma are vegetarians because they see the slaughter of animals for the purpose of food as violent, when there are less violent ways to maintain a healthy diet. Reverence for elders and teachers: This virtue is very important to learn respect and reverence for those who have wisdom and those who selflessly teach in love. The Guru or spiritual teacher is one of the highest principals in many Vedic based spiritualities, and is likened to that of God.

3.7 VIRTUES IN ISLAM

In the Muslim tradition the *Qur'an* is, as the word of God, the great repository of all virtue in earthly form, and the Prophet, particularly via his *hadiths* or reported sayings, the example of virtue in human form. The very name of Islam, meaning “acceptance,” proclaims the virtue of submission to the will of God, the acceptance of the way things are. Foremost among God’s attributes are mercy and compassion or, in the canonical language of Arabic, *Rahman* and *Rahim*. Each of the 114 chapters of the *Qur'an*, with one exception, begins with the verse, “In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful”. The Arabic word for compassion is *rahmah*. As a cultural influence, its roots abound in the *Qur'an*. A good Muslim is to commence each day, each prayer and each significant action by invoking God the Merciful and Compassionate, i.e. by reciting *Bi Ism-i-Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim*. The Muslim scriptures urge compassion towards captives as well as to widows, orphans and the poor. Traditionally, *Zakat*, a toll tax to help the poor and needy, is obligatory upon all Muslims (9:60). One of the practical purposes of fasting or *sawm* during the month of Ramadan is to help one empathize with the hunger pangs of those less fortunate, to enhance sensitivity to the suffering of others and develop compassion for the poor and destitute.

The Muslim virtues are: prayer, repentance, honesty, loyalty, sincerity, frugality, prudence, moderation, self-restraint, discipline, perseverance, patience, hope, dignity, courage, justice, tolerance, wisdom, good speech, respect, purity, courtesy, kindness, gratitude, generosity, contentment, etc.

3.8 VICIES

Vice is a practice or a habit considered immoral, depraved, and/or degrading in the associated society. In more minor usage, vice can refer to a fault, a defect, an infirmity or merely a bad habit. Synonyms for vice include fault, depravity, sin, iniquity, wickedness and corruption. The modern English term that best captures its original meaning is the word *vicious*, which means “full of vice”. In this sense, the word *vice* comes from the Latin word *vitium*, meaning “failing or defect”. Vice is the opposite of virtue.

The term *vice* is also popularly applied to various activities considered immoral by some: a list of these might include the abuse of alcohol and other recreational drugs, gambling, smoking, recklessness, cheating, lying and selfishness. Behaviors or attitudes going against the established virtues of the culture may also be called vices: for instance, effeminacy is considered a vice in a culture espousing masculinity as an essential element of the character of males.

3.8.1 The Christian Vices

Christians believe that there are two kinds of vice: those which originate with the physical organism as perverse instincts (such as lust), and those which originate with false idolatry in the spiritual realm. The first kind of vice, although sinful, is believed to be less serious than the second. Some vices recognized as spiritual by Christians are blasphemy (holiness betrayed), apostasy (faith betrayed), despair (hope betrayed), hatred (love betrayed) and indifference (scripturally, a “hardened heart”). Christian theologians have reasoned that the most destructive vice equates to a certain type of pride or the complete idolatry of the self. It is argued that through this vice, which is essentially competitive, all the worst evils come into being. In Judeo-Christian creeds it originally led to the *Fall of Man*, and as a purely diabolical spiritual vice, it outweighs anything else often condemned by the Church.

The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes between vice, which is a habit inclining one to sin. Note that in Roman Catholicism, the word “sin” also refers to the state which befalls one upon committing a morally wrong act; in this section, the word will always mean the sinful act. It is the sin, and not the vice, which deprives one of God’s sanctifying grace. Thomas Aquinas taught that “absolutely speaking, the sin surpasses the vice in wickedness”. On the other hand, even after a person’s sins have been forgiven, the underlying habit (the vice) may remain. Just as vice was created in the first place by repeatedly yielding to the temptation to sin, so vice may be removed only by repeatedly resisting temptation and performing virtuous acts; the more entrenched the vice, the more time and effort needed to remove it. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that following rehabilitation and the acquisition of virtues, the vice does not persist as a habit, but rather as a mere disposition, and one that is in the process of being eliminated.

Dante’s seven deadly vices are: Pride or vanity — an excessive love of the self (holding the self outside of its proper position regarding God or fellows; Dante’s definition was “love of self perverted to hatred and contempt for one’s neighbor”). In the Latin lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, pride is referred to as *superbia*. Avarice (covetousness, greed) — a desire to possess more than one has need or use for (or according to Dante, “excessive love of money and power”). In the Latin lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, avarice is referred to as *avaritia*. Lust — excessive sexual desire. Dante’s criterion was that “lust detracts from true love”. In the Latin lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, lust is referred to as *luxuria*. Wrath or anger — feelings of hatred, revenge or denial, as well as punitive desires outside of justice (Dante’s description was “love of justice perverted to revenge and spite”). In the Latin lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, wrath is referred to as *ira*. Gluttony — overindulgence in food, drink or intoxicants, or misplaced desire of food as a pleasure for its sensuality (“excessive love of pleasure” was Dante’s rendering). In the Latin lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, gluttony is referred to as *gula*. Envy or jealousy - resentment of others for their possessions (Dante: “love of one’s own good perverted to a desire to deprive other men of theirs”). In the Latin lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, envy is referred to as *invidia*. Sloth or laziness - idleness and wastefulness of time and/or other allotted resources. Laziness is condemned because it results in others having to work harder; also, useful work will not be done. Sloth is referred to in Latin as *accidie* or *acedia*.

Check your progress III

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. List the Hindu and Islamic Virtues.

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2. What is vice? Which are the seven deadly vices?

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3.9 LET US SUM UP

‘Virtue’ which comes from the Latin *virtus* means moral excellence. A virtue is a character trait or quality valued as being good. Personal virtues are characteristics valued as promoting individual and collective well-being, and thus good by definition. The opposite of virtue is vice. While for Socrates knowledge is virtue, for Aristotle virtue lies in the middle; and Plato speaks of the four cardinal virtues on which rest all the moral virtues. Every religion advocates a virtuous life and shuns vices. We have seen how Hinduism and Islam stress on various moral virtues and point a way to salvation. On the other hand, by looking at the vices and the seven deadly sins we have understood the way Christianity advocates a virtuous life. Hence the message of all the three religions: Live virtuously and avoid all the vices.

3.10 KEY WORDS

- Arete :** Greek term for excellence of any kind.
Virtue : Latin term for moral excellence.
Vitium : Latin term for vice, meaning defect.
Cardinal : comes from the Latin ‘cardo’ meaning hinge. So cardinal means the main virtue on which others are hinged.

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3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress I

1. The Greek term for virtue is *arête* which was used for excellence of any kind. But generally the excellence referred to is an excellence belonging to human being so that the virtues may be described as the forms of human excellence. 'Virtue' which comes from the Latin *virtus* means moral excellence. A virtue is a character trait or quality valued as being good.

Personal virtues are characteristics valued as promoting individual and collective well-being, and thus good by definition. The opposite of virtue is vice. In ethics, 'virtue' is used with two somewhat different meanings. (a) A virtue is a quality of character – a disposition to do what is right in a particular direction, or to perform one of the more universal duties. (b) A virtue is also a habit of action corresponding to the quality of character or disposition. We may refer to the honesty of a human person, or to the honesty of his dealings equally as virtues.

2. Virtue, according to Socrates, is the deepest and most basic propensity of humans. This virtue is *knowledge*. If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative "know thyself." Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master. According to Socrates virtue is the highest aim and greatest good one has to seek in life. He also insisted that if it is to be the highest aim and the greatest good it must have universal consistency and be the same for all. Now, what is universally consistent and the same for all is knowledge which is obtained through concept by the use of reason which is common in all. The relation between virtue and knowledge is inseparable. For, Socrates thinks that health, wealth, beauty, courage, temperance etc., which are customarily considered to be various forms of good, are good only if they are guided by wisdom; if guided by folly they could be considered forms of evil.

Answers to Check your progress II

1. Plato describes the four cardinal virtues in *The Republic*. They are: wisdom, courage, moderation, justice. Plato defines how an individual can attain these virtues: Wisdom comes from exercising reason; Courage from exercising emotions or spirit; Moderation (sometimes "temperance") from allowing reason to overrule desires; and from these Justice ensues, a state in which all elements of the mind are in concord with one another. Justice is described by Plato to be the founding and preserving virtue because only when someone understands justice can he or she gain the other three virtues, and once someone possesses all four virtues it is justice that keeps it all together.

2. Aristotle defined virtue as a habit of choice, the characteristic of which lies in the observation of the mean or of moderation, as it is determined by reason or as the practically prudent man would determine it. Aristotle regarded virtue as primarily a habit of action, and so it was with him only secondarily a quality of character. Virtue is not a mere habit, but a habit of choice. The point in Aristotle's definition which has been most discussed is his notion of the mean or middle course. A virtue is regarded as if it were a middle position between two vices; courage for example, is the middle position between rashness and cowardice, and liberality is the middle position between extravagance and miserliness. The place of the mean relative to the vices at the extremes depends on the circumstances of each individual. A soldier's courage should be nearer to rashness than that of a statesman, for it is his business to take risks which it would be criminal on the part of a statesman to take. This conception is obviously in agreement with the Greek emphasis on proportion and harmony in art, as expressed in the maxim 'Nothing too much' or virtue lies in the middle.

Answers to Check your progress III

1. The Hindu virtues are: altruism- selfless Service to all humanity, restraint and moderation, honesty, cleanliness, protection and reverence for the earth, universality, peace, non- violence/ahimsa, reverence and respect for elders and teachers. The Muslim virtues are: mercy, compassion, prayer, repentance, honesty, loyalty, sincerity, frugality, prudence, moderation, self- restraint, discipline, perseverance, patience, hope, dignity, courage, justice, tolerance, wisdom, good speech, respect, purity, courtesy, kindness, gratitude, generosity, contentment, etc.
2. Vice is a practice or a habit considered immoral, depraved, and/or degrading in the associated society. In more minor usage, vice can refer to a fault, a defect, an infirmity or merely a bad habit. Synonyms for vice include fault, depravity, sin, iniquity, wickedness and corruption. The modern English term that best captures its original meaning is the word *vicious*, which means "full of vice". In this sense, the word *vice* comes from the Latin word *vitium*, meaning "failing or defect". Vice is the opposite of virtue. The seven deadly vices are: pride or vanity, avarice, lust, wrath or anger, gluttony, envy or jealousy and sloth or laziness.

UNIT 4 MORAL LAW*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Defining (Natural) Moral Law
- 4.3 Reason and Morality
- 4.4 Universality and (Natural) Moral Law
- 4.5 Natural Moral Law and Change
- 4.6 Natural Moral Law and Human Dignity
- 4.7 Natural Moral Law and the Concept of Intrinsic Evil
- 4.8 Criticism of Natural Moral Law
- 4.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.10 Key Words
- 4.11 Further Readings and References
- 4.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Unit are as follows:

- To understand the phenomenon of morality;
- To define natural moral law and understand its nature, i.e. its universality and particularity; change of natural law, the relation of moral law to particular laws; its relation to human dignity; to the concept of intrinsic evil, and
- To understand and respond to the criticism of (Natural) Moral law.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of moral law is as widespread as humankind itself. So also is its critique. We can take the concept of *R. ta* (found in *R. gveda*) of Indian Philosophy as an example of natural moral law. The task here is to reflect on natural moral law. The phrase 'moral law' is most commonly ascribed to, and usually used in the context of, Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy. Our Ethics course has a separate unit on Kant's moral philosophy, so in this present unit our focus will be on natural moral law. In this unit the phrase 'moral law' should be taken to signify what is understood by 'natural moral law' unless specified otherwise. Firstly, we will undertake a brief description of the concept of natural moral law. Then some of the basic criticisms of natural moral law will be enumerated. Finally we will try to address some of these criticisms.

In the light of natural reason humans distinguish between good and bad. According to theoretical reason, wonder over the very existence of things is the beginning

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of all knowledge. The “prescribing character” or the “ought” character of the good is the primordial ethical phenomenon and ethics begins from that primordial phenomenon, and practical reason has also its origin here. The difference between good and bad is in the nature of the good. The good urges the human subject towards that which ought to be, and the bad pulls in the opposite direction. The good makes a claim on the human, and the one who has understood this has understood the contradiction between good and bad.

Ratio boni (the reason of the good or the call of good) is that all humans desire the good. All desire the good precisely because the good manifests itself as desirable. Whoever understands the *ratio boni* also understands the ‘ought’ character of the good. He or she also understands simultaneously the highest norm of morality, namely good is to be done and evil to be avoided. The supreme norm of (natural) moral law: do good and avoid evil, is born from or based on the ought character of the good.

Good is to be done and evil is to be avoided. The power of the good to lead to the good manifests itself in the judgement of practical reason urging humans to realize the good. The validity (*Gültigkeit*) of all the norms of practical reason rests on the primordial insight (*Ureinsicht*) into the meaning (*Sinn*) of the good. This is open to all humans. That is to say, the light of the good is available to all humans.

4.2 DEFINING (NATURAL) MORAL LAW

The supreme principle of ethics or morality is: good is to be done and evil to be avoided. And that one principle is grounded in the ought character of the good. It is from this one principle that practical reason draws all its other individual norms. All the individual laws of moral law, to the extent they refer to the one supreme principle of moral law (do good and avoid evil), participate in the reasonability of the supreme principle.

The presuppositions of any moral philosophy are a) the capacity of practical reason to perceive truth and, b) a substratum (rudimentary basis) of human nature that remains the same through all historical changes. A genuine ethical theory must believe in the universal validity of its principles.

Natural moral law presupposes that there is a common human nature which is constant. It is from that human nature that ethical principles are drawn. Thus the objective foundation of natural moral law is the nature of human beings. Moral law exists before practical reason, i.e. practical reason discovers it because natural moral law is grounded in the basic structure of being human. Moral law, unlike emotivism, (i.e., the theory that morality is a question of emotion), is based on the nature of being human.

Natural Moral law, or the phrase “by nature”, expresses the minimum presuppositions for being an ethical subject, that is, freedom and reason. Without these, one cannot be an ethical subject. Natural law understood as the minimum pre-suppositions for being human is same for all, in every culture and age. These minimum conditions are protected by the negative commands of natural law.

Natural Moral law as an ethical theory proposes principles that are valid for all people because it contains minimum indications for being human and it defends the most basic sector (*unhintergebarer Raum*) of a human being. The minimum

of natural law that is common to all humans is applicable everywhere and is independent of revelation or divine intervention. It is available to any human as human.

Natural Moral law as a moral philosophy is against relativism and believes in the truthfulness and universal validity of moral norms. One needs natural law to be able to criticize the ideologies of one's society. In the absence of natural law one will be forced to give equal value to both cannibalism and a democratically ordered society. Natural law must be the basis for individual moral laws and civil law, and it should be independent of any religious foundation. It should be accessible to any human as human.

Thomistic natural moral law is a combination of natural reason and the natural inclinations of human towards a fulfilled life (*gelungenes Leben*). Natural law and human life goals are given in the very nature of humans. There are goals in human life and the inclinations lead one to them. The goals are recognized as good by practical reason naturally, i.e. without any other aid.

The inclinations point to the goals that lead to fulfillment in life. Knowledge of good and evil follows the order of the inclinations. There are principally three types of inclinations: The first level inclinations are those inclinations in common with all substances. These concern self-preservation. The second level inclinations are inclinations in common with all living beings. These concern social living, procreation and education of the young. Third level inclinations are inclinations that are specific to humans. They concern striving for knowledge which include knowledge about God, and desiring to live in fellowship with others. The desire to live in fellowship calls for avoidance of ignorance. The same includes the inclination not to hurt one's fellow-beings.

The inclinations in humans correspond to the dictates of practical reason. But what is the precise relationship between the two? Interpreters of Thomas, the medieval philosopher, have proposed three types of relationship between the inclinations and practical reason. The inclinations are just a frame-work. Practical reason is decisive. There is a relationship of practical reason informing the inclinations. And finally there is the position that the inclinations give detailed goals of life and practical reason just approves them. Eberhard Schockenhoff, a German ethicist, is of the view that practical reason cannot be seen as just a ratifying agent. Nor can it be that the inclinations are an unlimited amount of raw material to be given form by practical reason. According to Schockenhoff, the supreme law of practical reason diversifies into individual ethical norms and together with the inclinations they form a unity informed by reason. Reason is like a music conductor who fine-tunes the inclinations. Or again, reason is like an author who transforms the rough draft of a book (inclinations) into a coherently written book. Reason informs the inclinations and they become norms of the actions of men.

Natural inclinations show the fulfillment image (*Vollendungsgestalt*) of being human only in an outline. Reason has to devise the means towards that goal, i.e. evolve norms for the conduct of humans to realize the goal. Humans must, in the light of reason, choose concrete actions to realize the life goals. To view the inclinations as giving in detail the norms of behaviour is to go against the reservation Thomas himself had about them. It is to read into Thomas what later Scholastics (philosophers between 9th and 14th centuries) said after two to three centuries.

Only those inclinations that are according to reason belong to natural moral law. The one supreme principle of natural moral law, namely, do good and avoid evil, splits into many individual norms so as to lead the inclinations to the fulfillment of human life.

4.3 REASON AND MORALITY

Humans obey a law because it is reasonable. Every law must have reason in it. The *vis obligandi* (the obligating or compelling power) of a law (*Gesetz*) does not come from outside itself but from the internal obligating character of reason itself. According to Thomas Aquinas the *regula et mensura* (rule and measure) of human acts is reason. The only criterion of morality is whether a human act is according to reason or not, i.e. if reason sanctions it or not.

The origin and validity of moral values come from practical reason. This is because it is reason that makes a law that which it is. Without reason there is no law. Reason and its law of non-contradiction finally decide about the content of any moral system. An immoral act is one that contradicts reason. It militates against reason. And it cannot be that a moral value is an importance in one place and a non-importance or its contradiction in another place.

There are two aspects in the faculty of reason in humans, namely, theoretical reason and practical reason. One is not subordinate to the other. They are not two faculties in humans but a single capacity of the self that is directed towards different objects; theoretical reason is directed towards truth in itself for its own sake, whereas practical reason is directed towards truth in so far as it has to be realized and acted upon.

The fact that both are faculties of the same soul does not rob them of their distinctiveness. These two have their own specific goals (*Ziele*). They are not subordinate to each other but they complement each other. The distinctiveness of both is shown in the fact that each has its own non-demonstrable first principles (*unbeweisbare Prinzipien*). They deduce from their own sources.

Theoretical and practical reason are complementary in the sense that the objects of their orientation can fall either in the field of theoretical reason or practical reason. The object of theoretical reason is the truth in itself. The object of practical reason is the good. The object of theoretical reason is truth in so far as it is worthwhile longing for. The object of practical reason is the good that has been discovered under the aspect of truth or as truth.

The first principles of theoretical reason are not probable. They are self-evident and they are understood by intuition. So also are the first principles of practical reason. Practical reason possesses its own naturally known and non-provable principles. They are not deduced or borrowed from theoretical reason. The first principles of practical reason are the first principles of natural law. They cannot be proved. They are intuitively known.

It belongs to practical reason to seek for the good in the light of its highest principle (do good and avoid evil). But it does not end there. It seeks further the ways or means to realize the good. Both functions belong to practical reason. Practical reason reaches the fullness of its activity to the extent it commands the recognized good to be realized. This is also called the law character of practical reason, i.e.

practical reason commands the recognized good to be executed. That is the difference of the universal propositions of practical reason from those of theoretical reason.

The judgments of practical reason do not have the same degree of certainty as those of theoretical reason because the judgments of practical reason deal with contingent events. That does not mean that they are not valid.

4.4 UNIVERSALITY AND (NATURAL) MORAL LAW

One can think about and practice a universal ethic only if one presupposes the universal validity and reach of reason in all men. There is a human nature that does not change. So too, there is an unchanging moral law.

Only the top-most principles (*oberste Prinzipien*) of practical reason and their conclusions are universally valid. The supreme principles of practical reason are valid for all because they are grounded in the very reasonability (*Vernunftfähigkeit*) of human beings. Secondary natural moral laws are those laws that flow from the first three: do good and avoid evil, the golden rule (do unto others what you would like them to do to you) and love of neighbour. The negative laws of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments as contained in the *Bible*) also belong to them. These laws are known to all, but they admit of exceptions. The findings of theoretical reason and their conclusions are valid for all (like the angles of an equilateral triangle are equal). That is not the case with practical reason. Except for the first or supreme principles, the findings of practical reason are contingent, i.e. they are not necessarily valid for all.

Once reason discovers a truth, it is valid for all. "It corresponds completely to the structure of historical perception of truth that such crossing of boundaries occurs in a particular time and place. Once such a discovery or crossing has taken place in the thought of the human spirit, it belongs to the permanent possession of mankind and is valid everywhere" (Schopenhoff, *Naturrecht*, p. 139). Truth once discovered is truth for all and it is independent of historical particularities. It is not dependent on being historically recognized. It transcends historical times and epochs. According to Max Scheler, as soon as a value is discovered, its validity is for all people of all time. It is so because an essential aspect of reality has been discovered. E. Troeltsch, another German philosopher, is of the same view.

Not all the commands of practical reason possess the trait (*Bewandnis*) of a law. Only the universal propositions/commands possess that. It is the aim of *Summa Theologica* I-II, Question 94, articles 4 and 5 of Thomas Aquinas to show that the universal natural law branches (*auffächert*) into individual concrete norms.

It is practical reason that discovers the universal natural laws. It is again practical reason that discovers the non-universal norms applicable to particular situations. Thus there are grades in the judgements or laws of practical reason.

If it is true that there is a universal concern of reason, then it shows itself at the international level as the international human rights issues. Natural moral law expresses the dignity of the human person. Moral law lays the foundation for rights and duties. To that extent moral law is universal and its authority is over all humans. The idea that there is a right which belongs to all human beings is the

possession of mankind itself. That it has not been respected at all times does not invalidate it.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is natural moral Law?

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2. Why is natural moral law universally valid?

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4.5 NATURAL MORAL LAW AND CHANGE

The different grades of certainty of the norms of practical reason and the diminishing certainty of individual concrete norms in different situations lead us to believe that moral law is an outline, formed by the supreme principles, within which reason has to find individual norms. Moral law is not a closed system with fixed norms. Only those norms that carry the tag “according to nature” are unchangeable. What concrete actions are to be classified as murder, theft and adultery will differ according to both divine and human norms/considerations.

Ethics transcends history. However, its individual norms need not be valid for every situation. The changeability and non-universality of the norms of practical reason are not due to the inborn incapacity of some humans to perceive moral norms nor is it due culpable ignorance. It is due to the contingency and diversity of situations. Besides, human nature changes in a certain sense. There are many laws of nature to which both human laws are added so as to make the true meaning of the laws correspond to the changed situation. For example, the law of not hating one’s neighbour was added to the prohibition of murder. Practical reason knows the universal laws and draws out concrete norms for the realization of the universal in the particular situation. That these concrete norms vary from place to place and do not possess the same degree of certainty of the universal norms is not a weakness or deficiency of moral law. It is, rather, due to the fact that reason is a finite reality, and concrete situations do not offer a greater degree of certainty.

Reason finds particular norms for particular situations. The experience of wise and sensitive individuals plays a crucial role here. There are exceptions to the universal laws in particular situations. For example, it is universally accepted

that borrowed things or goods given for safe-keeping must be returned. But one would not easily return the weapon of a man who is drunk and is intent on killing someone.

According to Eberhard Schockenhoff, a German ethicist, a list of laws that will not accommodate to changing situations is an unreasonable thing (*Unding*). It is impossible to write a catalogue of human rights that is valid for all time because it is impossible to get a view of the total. Moral law is not a finished catalogue of rights. It is rather the power of reason which discovers universal principles. These principles will take different forms in different cultures.

Moral law is opposed to historicism which believes that the human is an evolving creature and what s/he is will only be revealed by history. Historicism does not believe in the existence of an unchanging human nature. One has to counter historicism and say that there is a common metaphysical human nature and it is visible only in historical forms. That nature remains essentially same all through history. The moral norm which humans discover also takes place in a historical situation. But that fact does not contradict the existence of a common nature nor universal moral laws.

History is an essential dimension of humans and human nature. Because of that, that which is permanent in human nature can only be observed in historical manifestations. Humans live in history. One does not become human on account of history. One makes history on account of one's nature, on account of one's body-soul structure.

Nature and history are not opposed to each other. Humans are historical beings, i.e. one realizes oneself in history as a finite being. Human reason is also a historical reality in the sense that it realizes itself in a historical context. It does not live in the realm of the pure spirit. History is essential to humans and their nature. Thus natural rights, i.e. the idea of a moral criterion of good and evil that transcends all times and ages, must manifest itself in history. However, the dependence of reason on historical situations does not nullify its capacity to discover truth nor does it mean that a truth discovered in a historical context is valid only for that period.

Reason holds on to what has been achieved as experience (*Erfahrung*) in history. The same reason holds humans open to the new of every situation. With reason humans live in history. The same reason enables them to transcend history.

The flood of historical events and changes can make natural law appear as relative. It is true that an ethical insight is valid for all time. But its historical realization is often linked to compromises in concrete situations.

4.6 NATURAL MORAL LAW AND HUMAN DIGNITY

There is a core sector/aspect (*unhintergebarer Schutzraum*) in a human being. That centre is the person, the source of morality, and it is the aim of morality to protect that sector. The minimum requirements of moral law are the minimum requirements of human right and human dignity. That is to say that there is a basic requirement for being moral. So too there is a basic requirement for demanding and accepting human dignity and right. Human dignity and the rights that flow from it are universal and it can be demanded from any person or

government. Respect for human dignity is not just respect for the spiritual powers and convictions of human. It is a respect for the totality of human, body and soul. Humans live their lives not as angels but as embodied beings in this world.

In moral law, right and morality are closely related. Rights are the moral claims an individual makes on another human being or human beings. To the extent that natural law thinking sees rights arising from the supreme principles of practical reason and since morality itself is grounded in practical reason, rights are closely related to morality. Human rights and ethics belong together. They protect the elementary goals and values of life. Human rights are, like values, a historical manifestation of the principles of practical reason.

Human rights are the minimum conditions, in every age, under which a human being can be seen as an ethical subject and can be held responsible for his or her deeds. Natural human rights represent the minimum of being ethical.

Natural human right is the knowledge of a moral law that is independent of human domination or despotism. International human rights are built on the basis of natural rights. Natural rights point beyond themselves. They point to the wealth of religions and the way they propose to fulfill human life.

The state upholds the rule of law (*Rechtsordnung*). Rule of law aims at the realization of a life worthy of a human being. It guarantees the minimum space human beings need to realize themselves as ethical beings. Rule of law recognizes the inalienable rights of the person and his or her duty in the community.

Human rights presuppose freedom and are grounded in reason. Precisely because of that a change in the concept of rights or the discovery of new rights is possible. According to new insights and new situations, rights (civil rights) can change. Civil rights are grounded in natural rights. According to Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförde, a German ethicist, natural law and rights is a way of thinking of the practical reason. In the light of the fundamental goals of human life, it legitimizes the existing human rights. It also criticizes them and paves the way for progress in human rights.

4.7 NATURAL MORAL LAW AND CONCEPT OF INTRINSIC EVIL

If there is something intrinsically valuable, then it stands to reason to believe that there is also something intrinsically evil, because to attack the intrinsically good will be to create an intrinsically evil deed. It is inevitable to use the term “intrinsic evil” when it concerns the mutual respect a human has to show to the ethical subject.

The idea of intrinsic evil is not a special teaching of the Christian Church. It is the common property of a moral tradition starting with Aristotle and continuing in the teachings of Augustine, Thomas, Kant and all the non-utilitarians, i.e. deontological ethicists of today.

One should never do an intrinsically evil act. An intrinsically evil act is one that attacks or violates the absolute right, i.e. inalienable right of another person. An intrinsically evil act attacks the minimum conditions necessary for being human. This minimum condition is the possibility for free self-determination as an ethical

subject. An intrinsically evil act attacks the personal centre. Ready examples are rape and torture.

The negative commands of moral law prohibit intrinsically evil acts. Just as the concept of human dignity may not be able to enumerate all the laws needed to protect human dignity, so too the concept of intrinsic evil may not be able to produce an exhaustive list of intrinsically evil acts. The concept of intrinsic evil will remind humans of something which they should never do, without enumerating in detail what should be avoided as intrinsic evil in every age/epoch.

Rape, murder, torture and infidelity to one's word (breach of promise) are some of the intrinsic evil acts. The evil of rape consists in the fact that it violates the dignity of a human being. That dignity is rooted in freedom and reason. Rape is never in harmony with the respect that is due to a human being.

The innocent has an inalienable right, not to be offered as a means for the greater good of the community. It is the dignity of the other and the "in itself" value of the other (*Selbstzwecklichkeit*) that are the ontological grounds for loving humans as our neighbours for their own sake. Torture of the innocent is one of the intrinsic evils that cannot be done for any other good. Its evil consists in the fact that it violates the absolute right of the individual to determine himself/herself (*Selbstbestimmung*). Torture militates against the dignity of the innocent.

The prohibition of killing the innocent is valid in normal situations, and not in borderline cases and fictitious circumstances. There may be exceptions to the prohibition. For example, the killing of one's wounded fellow soldier so as to prevent him from falling into enemy hands which would mean torture and death. So also the killing of a man who cannot be extricated from a burning car after an accident. But even these killings are against the dictum: thou shall not kill. The body is the manifestation of a person. The prohibition to kill refers to the bodily existence of the human being. Humans are called to be reasonable beings. But they cannot exist reasonably without a body. Thus the command not to kill is a call to respect the dignity of the human as a bodily existing being.

In this context Schockenhoff refers to both teleologism and deontologism. For one, remaining faithful to teleologism, it is not possible to defend the concept of intrinsic evil. Teleologists may respect the command not to kill the innocent. But that is not out of the conviction that there are intrinsically evil acts, but because they feel that respecting the command not to kill the innocent will bring more benefit to society in the long run. Both teleologism and deontologism are complementary. While deciding about goods other than human beings, teleologism is in order. But while deciding about human beings, their dignity, etc., deontologism is absolutely necessary.

4.8 CRITICISM OF NATURAL MORAL LAW

In the light of the supreme moral principle, - good is to be done and evil to be avoided - practical reason orders the inclinations. The ordering function of practical reason depends on the order of the inclinations in setting up the *ordo praeceptorum*. The inclinations are pre-moral. Practical reason orders them to the fulfillment goal of man. The inclinations receive their moral quality through reason to the extent that reason invests in them the criterion of good and bad.

That there are certain basic drives in humans is undeniable. Modern humans, with an improved knowledge over descriptive or positive sciences, are in a better position to understand the drives/inclinations than Aquinas was in the thirteenth century.

The second criticism of Thomistic natural moral law is that it commits the fallacy of *petitio principii*. It reasons as follows: The concept of nature is an empty shell that is filled with arbitrary (*beliebig*) contents from sociology or anthropology, and the content is invested with the dignity of being ethical. *Petitio principii* is precisely the fact that, instead of proving the ethical dignity of the content, it is presupposed that the arbitrarily filled content of the concept of nature is ethical.

But the very existence of different grades of truth in the concept of natural moral law contradicts this accusation of *petitio principii*. If the content of the term nature was filled arbitrarily and then given ethical dignity, then every element of the content must have the same degree of certainty. That is not the case with Thomistic natural moral law. It is not true that Aquinas fills the empty shell of the concept of nature with any content. Rather he enumerates the basic presuppositions of morality in the concept of nature. They are: The human is a being of reason and is responsible for his/her being. As rational creatures, humans ought to recognize the “good and true” for the very being of humankind, and that very recognition brings them to their integral fulfillment. The human’s inclinations have an orientation towards the good and the true, and reason recognizes the good and the true and approves them. Finally, humans realize themselves as a body-soul reality necessarily in relation with other human beings and in harmony with the orientation of their soul towards the good and the true. These presuppositions are not just arbitrary principles (*Festlegungen*) from which arbitrary norms are drawn. Rather these are the very conditions that make morality possible at all.

The third criticism is that Thomas Aquinas has an unhistorical/unchanging understanding of human nature. The answer to this is that Thomas Aquinas does concede change in human nature. That is evident in the two levels of practical reason. The second level does admit of change of norms in different situations and a change in human nature in the sense of living human life differently in different epochs/ages. When Aquinas speaks of a change in human nature he does not mean that man becomes something other than human.

Human nature changes but an unchanging element is presupposed in every age and culture. This is evident from the concept of human dignity which is valid for all generations. Human dignity does not increase or decrease with the passage of time. That humans have certain rights on account of their dignity will also remain stable. What will change is only the way the rights are realized. For example, women had no voting rights in certain epochs.

Human nature manifests itself in different ways in different cultures. The cave human’s being human is different from the urban human’s being human. But they both remain humans. Human nature has to manifest itself in a particular culture, but no culture exhausts it. It transcends all historical manifestations.

4.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed natural moral law and its universality. We have seen how there is an essential relationship between moral values and reason. The

good manifests itself to reason. Or, it is only in the light of reason that the good becomes visible. The *vis obligandi* of any law is that it is reasonable, and the essence of moral evil is that it is against the order of reason.

We have seen that natural moral law is the law discovered by reason in humans. Moral law is inherent in the nature of humans, the core of which does not change. The basis of every good positive law is natural moral law. We have also seen that one cannot understand the concept of intrinsic evil without natural moral law. The discovery of the good leads to the discovery of the evil in itself.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Does natural moral law change?

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2. What is intrinsic evil?

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4.10 KEY WORDS

Law : *Law* is a system of rules, usually enforced through a set of institutions.

Nature : The word nature is derived from the Latin word *natura*, meaning “birth.” *Natura* was a Latin translation of the Greek word *physis*, which originally related to the intrinsic characteristics that plants, animals, and other features of the world develop of their own accord.

4.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. It is the natural moral law discovered by reason in the rational nature of man.
2. Natural moral law is universally valid because it is based on a human nature that is universally the same.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The natural moral law does not change. Its application to individual situations changes.
2. An intrinsically evil act is one that attacks the absolute right of another human being, no matter what the social benefit of that act is. Just as reason perceives the most basic natural law, so too it perceives certain acts as intrinsically evil.

UNIT 5 MORAL RELATIVISM*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Definition
- 5.3 Different types of Moral relativism
- 5.4 Philosophical Views
- 5.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Further Readings and References
- 5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

There is no single method to understand the concept of morality. Moreover, many a times there are varied confusions regarding morality because many philosophers consider morality to be illusion. There are many moral positions out of which moral relativism is one of the most popular one. It provides that we be bound at least by practices and codes of our culture, preferences, age group, and so forth. This unit presents,

- the philosophical meaning of the doctrine of moral relativism,
- views of various kind of moral relativism

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Philosophers have divided ethical theories into three general subject areas-Normative ethics, Meta ethics, and applied ethics. Normative ethics is also called prescriptive ethics as it studies the moral problems and seeks to discover how one ought to act. It does not investigate the facts of one's actions. More specifically, this discipline is concerned with judgments in setting up norms for when an act is right or wrong. It takes on a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. This might involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow. For example, honesty should be inculcated and dishonesty be discouraged. Applied ethics involves examining specific controversial issues such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights etc. Metaethics is also called analytical ethics. This disciple is concerned with elucidating the meaning of ethical terms. It asks 'what is' e.g. goodness, excellence, right, amoral and so on. It investigates where our ethical principles come from and what they mean. Are they human constructions or do they involve human emotions?

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Two questions that are prominent in Meta-ethics are- (1) Whether morality exists independent of humans or it depends on humans, and (2) What is the underlying mental basis of our moral judgments and conduct. Meta ethics is the most abstract area of moral philosophy as it does not ask what acts, or what kind of acts are good or bad, right or wrong; rather it asks about the nature of goodness and badness, what it is to be morally right or wrong. Meta-ethical positions may be divided according to how they respond to such questions. The biggest controversy in meta-ethics is the division between moral realists and moral anti-realists. Moral realists hold that moral facts are objective facts that are out there in the world independent of any human attitudes. Things are good or bad independent of us, and we come along and discover morality. Proponents of moral realism are called as realists or objectivists. Moral realism believes that objective values or moral facts are parts or the fabric of the universe. Moral anti-realists hold that moral facts are not out there in the world until we put them there, that the facts about morality are determined by us. In this view, morality is not something that we discover but something that we invent. For anti-realists, there is no moral truth when it comes to moral judgments and that anything goes when it comes to morality. Moral anti-realism can involve either a denial that moral properties exist at all or the acceptance that they do exist but that their existence is mind dependent. There are several different 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). Ethical subjectivism should not be confused with moral relativism. Ethical relativism is broader than ethical subjectivism. Ethical subjectivism holds that moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes or conventions of the observers or that any ethical sentence implies an attitude held by someone. Ethical relativism is the view that for a thing to be morally right is to be approved by the society, leading to the conclusion that different things are right for people in different societies and periods in history.

5.2 DEFINITION

Ethical relativism or Moral relativism is more easily understood in comparison to moral absolutism or moral objectivism. Absolutism claims that morality relies on universal principles (natural law, conscience). Moral absolutism is 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. Thus, actions are inherently moral or immoral, regardless of the beliefs and goals of the individual, society, or culture that engages in the actions. For example- Christian absolutists believe that God is the ultimate source of our common morality, and that it is therefore as unchanging as He is. 'Honesty is the best policy' is true or correct independent of any human's acceptance or rejection. Moral relativism asserts that morality is not based on any absolute standard. Rather ethical truths depend on variables such as situation, culture, one's feelings, etc. That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another. For example, an extra marital affair is condemnable to some societies while it is acceptable to others. For the ethical relativists, there are no universal moral standards- standards that can be universally applied to all people at all times. The only moral standards against which a society's practices can be judged are its own. There is no common framework in order to

resolve moral disputes or for reaching agreement on ethical matters among members of different societies. For moral relativists there is no one right answer to any ethical question. Moral relativism is a view that rejects the notion that there is one, universally valid morality, which can be discovered by valid moral reasoning.

Moral relativists endorse that-(1) Moral judgment is true or false and actions are right or wrong only relative to some particular standpoint. (2) No standpoint can be proved objectively superior to other. All attempts to define morality in terms of some common claim fails, for they all rest on premises that belong to the standpoint being defended and need not be accepted by people who do not share that point of view. One moral outlook cannot be conclusively proved superior to another does not mean however that it cannot be judged superior. Moral relativism rejects that moral values are naturalistic or non-naturalistic- are real or objective in the sense of being independent from human belief or culture. Such a position instead insists on the fundamentally anthropocentric nature of morality. According to this view, moral values are not out there in the world at all but are created by human perspectives and needs. These needs and perspectives can vary from person to person or from culture to culture. It is difficult to imagine human beings without the practice of evaluation and moral appraisal. What exactly does a moral relativist claim? For illustration let us consider an example. Runa opens a letter addressed to her teenage daughter Udesna, written by Udesna's American boyfriend Smith. Runa thinks she has a right to know about her daughter's love life, while Smith thinks this violates Udesna's privacy. Runa's view is supported by her culture and values, while Smith's view is supported by his own culture and values. A moral relativist might say that the judgment that Runa ought not open the letter is correct relative to Smith's system of values, and that at the same time, the same judgment is not correct relative to Runa's system of values. We always assess an action or human behavior as right or wrong.

Yet, in spite of seeming significance, there are some people who are skeptical about morality- about whether such a thinking as a truly universal moral system and whether moral claims are true or just a matter of opinions. Some argue that what is morally good is a matter of taste or a matter of convention. This view can be traced back to historian Herodotus who noted that there is an enormous cultural diversity on moral issues- in some countries cannibalism is permissible and in others, it is immoral. Similarly, eating beef is acceptable to some while for others it is immoral. Moral relativists do not deny that moral claims are true or false- only that truth-value is relative. Relativism maintains that there are no universal moral truths at all, where universalism is understood as true or false across all cultures. The moral relativist claims not only that the correctness of moral judgments can in this way depend on a thinker, or on the value system relevant to the thinker, but also there is no privileged correct value system. Thus a relativist's core claims are (1) moral judgements are relative, (2) There is no unique authority by which the correctness of all moral judgments must be assessed. The fact on which the correctness of moral judgments is claimed to depend may vary. Some types of relativists may claim that it depends on certain psychological characteristics of the judge. Others claim that it depends on sociological facts about the judge.

Many ethicists reject the theory of ethical relativism. Some claim that while moral practices of societies may differ, but the fundamental moral principles underlying these practices do not. For example, in some societies, killing one's parents after they reached a certain age was common practice, stemming from the belief that

people were better off in the afterlife if they entered it while still physically active and vigorous. While such a practice would be condemned in our society, we would agree with these societies on the underlying moral principle- the duty to care for parents. Societies, then, may differ in their application of fundamental moral principles but agree on principles. Also, it is argued that some moral beliefs are culturally relative whereas others are not. Certain practices, such as customs regarding dress and decency, may depend on local custom whereas other practices, such as slavery, torture, or political repression is governed by universal moral standards and is judged wrong despite many other differences.

For Relativists, the truth of the moral claim depends completely on the beliefs that are common to the culture in which the judgment is made. Readers might confuse moral relativism with moral subjectivism. There lies a thin difference between both these terms. Ethical subjectivism is not ethical relativism because ethical subjectivism believes that individuals create their own morality i.e. existence of morality can be dictated by individual experiences as there can be no objective truth. People’s beliefs about actions being right or wrong, good or bad, depend on how people feel about actions rather than on reason or system ethical analysis. The truth and falsity of moral utterances depends on the attitudes of people. A moral subjectivist would argue that the statement “ Rohit was evil” expresses a strong dislike for the sorts of things Rohit did, but it does not follow that it is true or false that Rohit was in fact evil. Both the terms are compatible in the sense that truth of moral claims is relative to the attitudes of individuals.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is moral relativism?

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2. How is moral relativism different from moral absolutism?

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3. Is moral relativism same as moral subjectivism?

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5.3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF MORAL RELATIVISM

The denial of universalism is a popular view because of the fact that some think that in order to be tolerant of others, we need to reject universalism with respect to truth in morality and instead ascribe to relativism. Different people arrive at different understandings and there are no basic moral demands that apply to everyone. When one explores the history of humankind, one cannot but be struck by a profound lack of consensus on many questions. Different societies and cultures and different people within the same society or culture appear to have dramatically different moral beliefs and practices. For instance, the moralities of some societies pronounce that abortion is unacceptable. The moral codes of other societies permit abortion. In light of such deep differences in moral beliefs and practices it is obvious to many that there are no universal, generally applicable moral principles, rules, and values, valid for all places and issues. Morality has no objective, rational basis, that there are no objective moral truths upon which all reasonable people could be expected to agree were they fully aware of all the relevant facts and information. When it comes to morality many say that “everything is relative.”

Moral relativism can be understood in several ways-

- (1) **Descriptive Relativism-** Descriptive relativism is also known as cultural relativism. It states that beliefs or standards about moral issues are relative to different individuals and different societies i.e. different individuals and different societies accept different moral beliefs and thus disagree about the answers to moral questions. For example, some societies condemn abortion; others accept it. In some cultures, women are not allowed to enter the kitchen in her menstruating days.

Descriptive relativism denies that there are any moral universal claims that every human culture endorses. Richard Brandt has used the term descriptive relativism to refer to the view that there are fundamental disagreements about the moral beliefs or moral standards of different individuals or different societies. It is simply a claim about how things are, it is not a normative or evaluative judgment of any sort; the act of polygamy is morally permissible in one culture and forbidden in another.

- (2) **Moral requirement relativism or normative relativism-** This states that different basic moral requirements apply to different moral agents, or groups of agents owing to different intentions, desires or beliefs among such agents or groups. Normative relativism states that moral requirements binding on a person depend on or are relative to her intentions, desires, or beliefs. Normative moral relativism is the idea that all societies should accept each other’s differing moral values, given that there are no universal moral principles. For example, just because bribery is accepted in some cultures does not mean that other cultures cannot rightfully condemn it. Since nobody is right or wrong, we ought to tolerate the behavior of others. Normative relativism is the view that it is wrong to judge or interfere with the moral beliefs and practices of cultures that operate with a different moral framework to one’s own so that what goes on in a society can only be judged by the norms of that society. Two common forms are-

- (a) **Individual moral requirement relativism** states that an action is morally

obligatory for a person if and only if that action is prescribed as part of the basic moral principles accepted by an individual.

- (b) **Social moral requirement relativism** states that an action is morally obligatory for a person if and only if that action is prescribed as part of the basic moral principles accepted by that person’s society. This is the most popular form of moral relativism.
- (3) **Metaethical relativism-** It states that moral judgments are not objectively true or false and thus that different individuals or societies can hold conflicting moral judgments. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to think and act as though our own moral views or those of our society or culture are obviously correct. It holds that moral judgments are not true or false in any absolute sense but only relative to particular standpoints. Saying that the truth of moral claims is relative to some standpoint should not be confused with the idea that it is relative to the situation in which it is made. It states that there are no moral objective grounds for preferring the moral values of one culture to another. Societies make their moral choices based on the unique beliefs, customs, and practices. Moreover, people tend to believe that ‘right’ moral values are values that exist in their own culture. They do not only believe that people disagree about moral issues but that the terms such as good, bad, right and wrong do not stand subject to universal truth conditions at all. Rather they are relative to traditions, practices of individuals or of groups. Most forms of meta-ethical relativism envision moral values as constructed for different, and sometimes-incommensurable human purposes such as social coordination and so forth. This view is called Moral constructivism and is explicitly endorsed by Gilbert Harman. Another view of moral relativism states that moral values are constructed by divine commands- idealized by human rationality or social contract between competing interests. This is called Divine-command Theory.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the different types of moral relativism?

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2. What is the nature of meta-ethical relativism?

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5.4 PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

In philosophical discussions, the term ‘moral relativism’ is primarily used to denote the meta ethical thesis that the correctness of moral judgments is relative to some factor, i.e. relative to an individual’s or group’s moral norms. Strictly speaking, there is more than one way of understanding this doctrine. It encompasses views and arguments that people in various cultures have held over several years ago. The ancient Jaina Philosophy gives the theory of *Anekantavada*. According to this theory means that reality is not absolute in nature and there are many sides to it. There is no single point of view, which portrays the complete truth or reality. The same principle was articulated by the Greek sophist Protagoras (c 481-420 B.C). This principle enjoyed a revival following the anthropological discoveries of the late 19th century. Protagoras asserted famously that *Man is the measure of all things*. It arose from the observation that other societies survived perfectly well, in spite of having different moral codes from those the observers were brought up in. The Greek historian Herodotus (c 484-420 B.C) observed that each society regards its own belief system and way of doing things better than all others do. Various philosophers questioned the idea of an objective standard of morality. This in turn led to doubt that there was only one correct set of values. Its guiding thought is that *there is more than just one true morality*. There is no one system of morality- say Christian or Islamic- which is binding at all times in all places. Different cultures, at different times and places, have different ways of life and moral practices. It is possible that all such practices are correct. A moral system is not true absolutely, but true for a particular culture, or a particular individual. Is moral relativism true? To answer this question, we had better be clear what sorts of truths are meant to be relative and what sorts are not. For many people inclined towards moral relativism end up saying that all truth is relative-not just moral truth. According to them, there is no such thing as a detached, objective perspective on truth: all judgment is made from within a particular standpoint. It is inevitable that this growing uncertainty led to increased tolerance and acceptance of other ways of life. The truth of relativism entails that we should not morally judge others. The idea was that moral beliefs and practices are bound up with customs and conventions, and these vary greatly between societies. Even though moral relativism made its first appearance in ancient times, it hardly flourished. Many scholars see its reappearance in the writings of Montaigne. In the centuries following, further trends in modern philosophy helped prepare the way for moral relativism. In the 17th century, Hobbes argued for a social contract view of morality that sees moral rules like laws, as something humans agree upon in order to make social living possible. According to Hobbes moral tenets are not right or wrong according to whether they correspond to some transcendent ideas, rather they should be appraised pragmatically according to how well they serve their purpose. In the early modern era, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1673) notably held that nothing is inherently good or bad. For he sees that the attribution of qualities like goodness or perfection are errors that are based upon the false belief that nature is designed by God with humanity in mind. This family of concepts, which includes moral and aesthetic concepts along with concepts of sensible qualities, holds to be produced by the imagination rather than reason. David Hume (1711-1776) in several important respects serves as the father of emotivism and moral relativism. He argues that prescriptions saying how we should act cannot be

logically derived from factual claims about the way beings are. He raised doubts about the possibility of proving the correctness of any particular moral point of view. For him, morality is based ultimately on feelings rather than on reason. However, he does not espouse relativism but distinguishes between matters of fact and matters of value. He suggested that moral judgments consist of matters of value for they do not deal with verifiable facts obtained from the world; but only with our sentiments and passions. He famously claimed that morality has objective standards and suggested that the universe remains indifferent to preferences and our troubles. Nietzsche (1844-1900) emphasized the need to analyze our moral values and how much impact they may have on us. The problem, Nietzsche found, in conventional morality is, that it does not give scope to our self-creating capacity. Nietzsche called it “will to power”. Therefore, conventional morality becomes a threat to human freedom or human potentiality to create something. His famous pronouncement that “God is dead” implies that the idea of transcendent or objective justification for moral claims is no longer credible. According to Nietzsche, one remains strange to oneself while one is following the imposed rules and regulation. These imposing rules and regulations were done earlier by religions in the name of a supernatural being (God). Instead of using our reason, we go with religion by faith. Religion hides our real identity by imposing rules and regulation and making us follow it. Here we simply accept and follow what we are told to be “good,” and “bad.” Here our life lacks the self-reflective and self-creating capacity. According to Nietzsche, “we are not ‘knower’ when it comes to ourselves.” He believed that morality should be constructed actively, making them relative to who we are and what as an individual we think about good and bad action, instead of reacting to moral laws made by a certain group of individuals in power. Edward Westermarck (1862-1939), an anthropologist ranks as one of the first to formulate a detailed theory of moral relativism. He portrayed all moral ideas as subjective judgments that reflect one’s upbringing.

Check Your Progress III

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
- b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the arguments given by Nietzsche on moral relativism?

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Moral relativism has become an increasingly popular view because of the following reasons-

- (1) **The downfall stage of religion-** Religion seems to offer the possibility that morality was independent of us. With a turning away from religion there seems to have come a certain amount of doubt about the possibility of objective morality. We have, the moral relativist says, no better place to look than to the individual or his society.

- (2) **The observing of cultural diversity-** Most of us are aware that the world contains many different cultures and that some of those cultures engage in practices very different from our own. Given all these, there can be no single objective morality because morality varies with cultures. This is the most commonly cited reason given in favor of ethical relativism and is the undeniable fact of widespread difference of opinion on important moral questions. Some societies have considered slavery to be within the natural order of things while others have condemned it as a moral abomination. Many individual sees abortion as nothing short of murder, while others condemn attempts to prevent abortion as unacceptable violations of a woman's right to control her own reproductive processes. In light of such vast differences of opinions it is not reasonable to believe in an objective moral truth. If such objective standards would not exist, there would be a good deal of agreement on moral matters than one actually discovers.

The theory of ethical relativism has some serious disadvantages and we can point out some arguments against moral relativism. One of the most powerful arguments is regarding the existence of some objective moral truths. Another flaw is that given the extent of disagreement about moral issues, it follows that there are no objective moral truths. Relativism tells us little or nothing about how actually people should behave. For much the same reason, the position of the moral reformer or critic is commonly thought to be incoherent if ethical relativism is true. Suppose the cultures whose moral practices Rina wishes to criticize are not someone else's but her own. Suppose that Rina is the one who lives in a society whose conventional moral practices clearly incorporate the institution of slavery and that Rina rejects this terrible view completely. She sincerely believes slavery to be morally wrong. In fact, she believes it to be an abomination, which must be eradicated from all civilized societies. Suppose now that Rina makes the following claim to anyone who will listen: "Slavery is morally wrong." If moral relativism is true, then, *prima facie* her claim is necessarily incorrect or false, as anyone who cared to do so could easily demonstrate. Since slavery is, as a matter of fact, morally sanctioned by the conventional standards of her society, it appears to follow from moral relativism that Rina's critical claim cannot be right. At best she can be interpreted as saying — on some ground other than morality — that slavery should not be moral. Perhaps she could argue, on purely prudential grounds, that our collective self-interest suggests that we should ban slavery because it eventually leads to serious social instability. Or perhaps she could argue, on strictly economic grounds, that slavery is an inefficient system of production better replaced by a fully open, free-market system in which former slaves are economically motivated to contribute productively to the economy. All of these are possible reasons for criticizing the practice of slavery as it is found within Rina's society. But none serves as a moral reason. If moral relativism is true, it would seem that Rina cannot intelligently deny that slavery is, as a matter of fact, a morally justified practice. Rina seems to be left with no intelligible space in which to criticize her culture's practices on moral grounds. Failure to provide intelligible space for the moral reformer is a serious shortcoming of any theory of morality.

Moreover, relativism is logically incoherent. Consider the statement: all truth is relative. If this statement is objectively true, then relativism is false because there is at least one objective truth- namely, the truth that truth is relative. But if the statement is only subjectively true, then as we have already seen, this just means

that you believe in relativism. Thus, by claiming that truth is relative you either contradict yourself or make a trivial claim with nothing to recommend your belief.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the two reasons that have popularized the concept of moral relativism?

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5.5 LET US SUM UP

Moral relativism means that a belief, idea, proposition, claim, etc. is never true or false, good or bad, right or wrong, absolutely. According to the moral relativist, there exist conflicting claims that are both true. In short, ethical relativism denies that there is any objective truth about right and wrong. Ethical judgments are not true or false because there is no objective moral truth- x is right –for a moral judgment to correspond with. In brief, morality is relative, subjective, and non-universally binding and disagreements about ethics are like disagreements about which flavor of toffee is best. And what specifically might morality be relative to? Usually morality is thought to be relative to a group’s or individual’s beliefs, emotions, opinions, wants, desires, interests, preferences, feelings etc. There are three ways of understanding moral relativism- cultural moral relativism, normative moral relativism, and meta-ethical moral relativism. The theory of moral relativism has its roots in ancient Greek Philosopher Protagoras and flourished through modern times from Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, and Nietzsche. Moreover, relativism is neither supported by our inability to know what’s true, nor by the fervency of our belief in relativism. It is a claim that all things are relative that are incoherent or illogical.

5.6 KEY WORDS

Subjectivism: Subjectivism is the philosophical tenet that our mental activity is the only unquestionable fact. The truth and falsity of moral utterances are dependent on the attitudes of people.

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5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to check your progress I

1. Moral relativism asserts that morality is not based on any absolute standard. Rather ethical truths depend on variables such as situation, culture, one's feelings, etc. That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another. For example, an extra marital affair is condemnable to some societies while it is acceptable to others. Moral relativists endorse that-(1) Moral judgment is true or false and actions are right or wrong only relative to some particular standpoint. (2) No standpoint can be proved objectively superior to others. All attempts to define morality in terms of some common claim fails, for they all rest on premises that belong to the standpoint being defended and need not be accepted by people who do not share that point of view.
2. Ethical relativism or Moral relativism is more easily understood in comparison to moral absolutism or moral objectivism. Absolutism claims that morality relies on universal principles inherent in the natural law, conscience or some other fundamental source. For example- Christian absolutists believe that God is the ultimate source of our common morality, and that it is therefore as unchanging as He is. 'Honesty is the best policy' is true or correct independent of any human's acceptance or rejection. Moral absolutism is 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. Thus, actions are inherently moral or immoral, regardless of the beliefs and goals of the individual, society, or culture that engages in the actions.
3. There is a thin difference between moral or ethical relativism and moral or ethical subjectivism Ethical relativism is broader than ethical subjectivism. Ethical subjectivism holds that moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes or conventions of the observers or that any ethical sentence implies an attitude held by someone. Ethical relativism is the view that for a thing to be morally right it must be approved by the society, leading to the conclusion that different things are right for people in different societies and periods in history. For the relativists, the concern is not about whether moral judgments exist or not but whether they are true or false relatively i.e.

depending either on the moral framework of the individual or groups. Ethical subjectivism believes that individuals create their own morality i.e. existence of morality can be dictated by individual experiences as there can be no objective truth. People's beliefs about actions being right or wrong, good or bad, depend on how people feel about actions rather than on reason or system ethical analysis. The truth and falsity of moral utterances depend on the attitudes of people. An ethical subjectivist would argue that the statement "Rohit was evil" expresses a strong dislike for the sorts of things Rohit did, but it does not follow that it is true or false that Rohit was in fact evil. Both the terms are compatible in the sense that truth of moral claims is relative to the attitudes of individuals.

Answers to check your progress II

1. There are three types of moral relativism- (1) Descriptive relativism or cultural relativism, (2) Normative relativism or moral requirement relativism and (3) Meta ethical relativism.
2. Meta ethical relativism- It states that moral judgments are not objectively true or false and thus that different individuals or societies can hold conflicting moral judgments. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to think and act as though our own moral views or those of our society or culture are obviously correct. It holds that moral judgments are not true or false in any absolute sense but only relative to particular standpoints. It states that there are no moral objective grounds for preferring the moral values of one culture to another. Societies make their moral choices based on their unique beliefs, customs, and practices. Moreover, people tend to believe that 'right' moral values are values that exist in their own culture. They do not only believe that people disagree about moral issues but that the terms such as good, bad, right and wrong do not stand subject to universal truth conditions at all rather are relative to traditions, practices of individuals or of groups.

Answers to check your progress III

1. Nietzsche's argument of morality sets a firm base for the theory of moral relativism. For him, what is right or good depends on those who are in power. He does not believe in an objective or universal morality, which he termed as conventional morality. His famous pronouncement that "God is dead" implies that the idea of transcendent or objective justification for moral claims is no longer credible. According to Nietzsche, one remains strange to oneself while one is following the imposed rules and regulation. This imposing of rules and regulations were done earlier by religions in the name of a supernatural being (God). Instead of using our reason, we go with religion by faith. Religion hides our real identity by imposing rules and regulation and making us follow it. Here we simply accept and follow what we are told to be "good," and "bad." Here our life lacks the self-reflective and self-creating capacity. According to Nietzsche, "we are not 'knower' when it comes to ourselves." He believed that morality should be constructed actively, making them relative to who we are and what we as individuals good and bad etc.

Answers to check your progress IV

1. Moral relativism has become an increasingly popular view because of the following two reasons-

(1) The downfall stage of religion- Religion seems to offer the possibility

that morality was independent of us. With a turning away from religion there seems to have come a certain amount of doubt about the possibility of objective morality. We have, the moral relativist says, no better place to look than to the individual or his society.

2. Observing the cultural diversity- Most of us are aware that the world contains many different cultures and that some of those cultures engage in practices very different from our own. Given all these, diversity there can be no single objective morality because morality varies with cultures. This is the most commonly cited reason given in favor of Moral Relativism is the undeniable fact of widespread difference of opinion on important moral questions. Some societies have considered slavery to be within the natural order of things while others have condemned it as moral abominations. Many individual views abortion as nothing short of murder, while others condemn attempts to prevent abortion as unacceptable violations of a woman's right to control her own reproductive processes. In light of such vast differences of opinions it is not reasonable to believe in an objective moral truth. If such objective standards would not exist, there would be a good deal of agreement on moral matters than one actually discovers.

UNIT 6 VIRTUE ETHICS: ARISTOTLE*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 How One Can Lead/Live One's Life
- 6.3 Plato and Virtue Ethics
 - 6.3.1 Virtue Ethics
- 6.4 Aristotle and Virtue Ethics
 - 6.4.1 Ethics
 - 6.4.2 Eudaimonia
- 6.5 G.E.M. Anscombe and Virtue Ethics
 - 6.5.1 Virtue Ethics
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.7 Key Words
- 6.8 Further Readings and References
- 6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present chapter include:

- Understanding the importance of virtues in Human conduct. Re - looking on Human values.
- Understanding the difference between 'just', 'unjust', 'moral' and 'immoral', 'virtuous' and 'non- virtuous' behavior.
- Virtue leading to Eudaimonia.
- Justice, Temperance, Courage and its essentialities to human existence. Virtue Ethics developed mainly by Aristotle.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Ethics can also be understood as a 'study of conduct' of human beings. It can also be understood as one that studies virtue or moral character. So someone (if need arises) should be helped because it is kind and generous to help people. This is what 'Virtue Ethics' aims to do. In the present world, there is a necessity to understand and analyze human conduct/ behavior. This is a philosophical branch developed by Aristotle and Other Ancient Greeks. This philosophy looks for a 'Virtue based Ethics', i.e., we acquire virtue through practice. Largely this unit will try to look into what is Virtue Ethics, how can we understand the historicity behind it? Here, we will first begin with Aristotle (to know the beginning of

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Virtue Ethics) and in order to understand Virtue Ethics in relation to changes in Modern Philosophy; we will later refer to G.E.M. Anscombe.

The purpose of this unit is to make us re-think how essential and important are virtues like Justice, Courage, and Temperance, as said by Plato. It is important to re-visit and re-think along with these concepts in the contemporary world. These still act as one of the founding stones in any society, and democracy. Comparing them and seeing them in the light of virtue is something which Plato did as it was his way in which he wanted the mass to understand the importance of these qualities as virtues. It was his appeal to make people understand that how important it is to know yourself as well as act after contemplating. Virtue Ethics acts as a ‘tool’ in the contemporary world which can be used to understand the ‘wrongness’ in human conduct/ behavior.

It would be wrong (misleading) to say that Plato and Aristotle are the only thinkers/ philosophers to read and engage with, while understanding Virtue Ethics. If Aristotle is important to read in the realm of Virtue Ethics in the West, so is Confucius (Chinese Philosopher) in the East. Virtue stands for a perfect trait or character which one possesses. Most of the philosophers of Virtue Ethics agree in perceiving ‘virtue’ as the highest and practical wisdom essential in order to obtain it, though they do differ in how they do conjunction (combination) of them. There are different ways of doing it. The first could be called that Virtue Ethics based on Eudaimonism. They understand and define virtues in relation to Eudaimonia. The term Eudaimonia flourishes in Greek Philosophy where it stands for Well-being and happiness. So according to them virtues enable a human being to lead a eudemonia life.

6.2 HOW CAN ONE LEAD/ LIVE ONE’S LIFE?

How do we differentiate between ‘Right’ and ‘wrong’? How do we differentiate between rightful and wrongful behavior? For a detailed understanding of questions and dilemmas like these, one looks up to Ethical Theories. Virtue Ethics makes us contemplate on questions likes ‘What makes an action as Right?’ ‘Am I a Right Person?’ Virtue Ethics deals not only with moments, events, and stages, but whole life, i.e. throughout my life what should I do to do Right and to look Right? So here actions aren’t judged because of one abstract moral theory but rather how they portray virtue. The larger question is how should one lead his/ her life? The answer which virtue ethicists give lies in living with virtues, a society becomes a good society when you have people living a virtuous life.

For instance, a women is broke (she doesn’t have money) to pay her debts. She visits her friend’s place and she sees lots of cash in the wardrobe, knowing the fact that her friend comes from a very rich family. She knows that even if she takes some cash it would hardly make a difference in her friend’s life. Virtue Ethics works in moments like these, where she is in the dilemma to what to do? How she should live her life? From beginning we have been told that stealing is bad but here stealing would help her in paying off her debts. So what does she do here? How does she know that living a life like this would be better? In instances like these we look up to Virtue Ethics. As it talks about how life should be lived. They say that the purpose of life is Eudemonia and virtue acts as a medium to attain it. Here Virtue stands for those qualities which can help an individual attain Eudemonia or fulfillment or well-being.

What is trait of a character? While we admire someone why do we admire them? Virtues reveal what a person is like which we admire. Virtue is something which we admire, we look up to. There is also a possibility that we might admire something which isn't good. We admire honesty, beauty, intellect, courage and many others. If someone has courage we admire her, if they don't we might look down to them. Virtue, therefore, also stands for excellence and perfection. It can stand for excellent and perfect behavior. For instance people admire Mother Teresa, Mahatama Gandhi because of certain behavioral traits they have, which we also like to have. Whether it is compassion, love, care or servitude we like to have them in our behavior that is why when we see these qualities in other person's behavior we admire them, like them. So these can be treated as virtues according to Greek Philosophers which help us in achieving Eudeamonia which is the ultimate happiness, well-being or fulfillment.

Check your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is virtue Ethics?

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2. Is there a difference between de-ontological ethics and Virtue Ethics? Explain.

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3. Does Virtue Ethics believe in living a virtuous life? Explain.

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4. What is the relevance of virtues in the contemporary world? Explain.

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6.3 PLATO AND VIRTUE ETHICS

Plato (428- 437) was one of the finest philosopher of the Greek tradition. He was also the teacher of Aristotle and the founder of the academy in Athens. His notable works include *Apology, Phaedo, Republic, The laws, The Meno* and *The Symposium*. One of the important ways of philosophizing for Plato was dialogue. Dialogue acts as an important method for philosophizing. Even one of his most important works called *Republic* has all the discussions happening in the form of dialogue. Republic contains very important dialogues on Virtue Ethics.

6.3.1 Virtue Ethics

Plato advocated a ‘virtue based’ ethics based on Eudaimonia. If happiness is the highest attainment of moral conduct then virtue acts as a key/ mode to achieve Eudaimonia. In *Republic* Plato has mentioned ethics which is based on Eudaimonia. The four virtues are:

Wisdom

Temperance

Courage

Justice

The purpose of his ethics was to help people achieve Eudaimonia which is also known as fulfillment or well-being. Plato argued for “Knowing yourself”. Socrates said “An unexamined life is not worth living”. Both of them were dwelling and contemplating on ‘How life should be lived’? While many understand Republic as a political text which deals with state and justice alone while it has a lot to offer to Virtue Ethics. Precisely that’s the reason that Plato has considered Justice as the last and the most important virtue which a human being should possess.

In a dialogue on virtue, Plato says that state, community and philosophy can play an important role in helping the person to live a ‘virtuous life’. It has many dialogues which he had with his students on Virtue. A just person is someone who is in control of himself and he doesn’t get driven by his desires.

Table I: Tripartite nature of soul, state and virtue

Soul	State	Virtue
Reason (Rational)	Ruler	Wisdom/ Knowledge
Spirit	Guardians (Soldiers)	Bravery/ Courage/ Loyalty
Appetite	Citizens	Temperance

The three parts of the soul and state has a counterpart of virtues. Reason has the wisdom of knowledge as their virtues. The Rulers/ Warrior/ Soldiers who protect the State, they accord the Spirit and share the virtue of Bravery and Loyalty

together. Here both of these virtues shouldn't be seen as equivalent rather they stand in relation to each other. Soldiers who have also been seen as the guardians of the state should be brave enough to be called fearless and they should be loyal to the state, its society. The Citizens have Appetite and they have Temperance as their virtue, they should have Self Control.

These would be the root/ core virtues which a human being should have in his life. All other virtues stem from it. The first virtue is Courage; it's the most important virtue, Patience, Generosity is rooted in Courage. Temperance stands for balance, it stands for maintaining a balance, equilibrium. The Soul should know how to balance. Chastity, contentment, trustworthiness comes from this virtue. From Wisdom comes understanding. The last virtue is called Justice which stands for fairness and justice. Justice comes with mercy; there is more to virtue than these qualities alone.

The idea of justice in Republic begins with a dialogue with an old man where he says, 'justice means no harm'. It discusses goodness, morality. Justice is good because it has good consequences. Justice is good because it prevents us from harming each other. Republic consists of 'lived dialogues' and conversations (Which the Indian Philosopher Daya Krishna calls as *Samvad.*). He asks one of the fundamental questions, 'Why should we be good'? Justice is a virtue that concerns everybody, it concerns the society. A society remains incomplete as long as it cannot promise justice to its people and countrymen. Justice stands for harmony, it's one of the most fundamental, ethical and social necessity of any society.

6.4 ARISTOTLE AND VIRTUE ETHICS

Aristotle (384- 322 B.C.E.) can be called one of the pioneering figures in Greek Philosophy. He philosophized on Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics and Theology. He was one of the students of Plato. He critiqued Plato's Theory of forms. He is also called as 'Father in the field of Logic'. He was the first to develop systematic way of arguing which includes arguments and propositions. Most of his works are written in the form of lectures and notes.

6.4.1 Ethics

How can we best live our lives? Aristotle said that we should keep on asking ourselves this question more often. In order to answer this question he propounded the branch of philosophy called Virtue Ethics. In *Nichomachean Ethics*, one of the biggest questions for Aristotle stands as 'What is Good'? The good for humanity is to attain virtue, to become a virtuous person. In pursue of this question he dwelled into the realm of virtue and practical wisdom. Practical wisdom (phronesis) is an intellectual virtue, a virtue necessary and important for the acquirement of moral virtues. There is also one more kind of wisdom, i.e. Theoretical Wisdom (Sophia) which can be called as a *summum bonum* of all the eternal truths. There are different kinds of virtues like Courage, Loyalty, Honesty, Temperament and Integrity. Aristotle talked about *Moral Virtues* which are as follows:

Courage

Temperance

Liberality

Magnificence

Magnanimity

Ambition

Truthfulness

Wittiness

Righteous

Modesty

Friendliness

He divided Plato's Cardinal Virtues into the above written Moral virtues. He also added the concept to Intellectual Virtues which includes:

Intelligence

Theoretical Wisdom

Aristotle said 'you become what you repeatedly do', so in order to lead a happy life a person should lead as well as live her life with virtue. For instance, Aristotle says that you don't become a liar because you just lied once; you became a liar because you repeatedly started lying. Hence it became a habit for you. Therefore virtue can be practiced by repeatedly doing it.

6.4.2 Eudaimonia

This Greek term can be translated as happiness, well-being or human flourishing. Virtue leads to happiness or a good life. The opposite of virtue is vice. One can have two extremes in this, for instance one can have the vice of deficiency on the one hand and vice of excess on the other. For instance seeing someone getting mugged, if you run away in order to save yourself that would be the deficiency of your virtue of courage. Or if a person has gun and you are trying to stop him unarmed would be excess of vice or courage (in this case). The best thing to do here would be to get the help of the local police authorities so that you can save him as well as yourself. Virtue also acts as a golden mean between two extremes.

The biggest happiness (Eudaimonia) one can have or possess is by developing intellectual virtues. The virtue of courage occupies the middle path between being coward on the one hand and being overly rash on the other. Acquiring intellectual virtues as well as virtue of character makes the *highest good* according to Aristotle which also stands for Eudaimonia.

6.5 G. E. M. ANSCOMBE AND VIRTUE ETHICS

Elizabeth Anscombe or Miss Anscombe as she was popularly known was one of the important women philosophers of the twentieth century. She was a religious believer and a virtue ethicist. She is known for her works on ethics and philosophy of action. Her one of the important works includes her papers titled '*Modern Moral Philosophy*' and '*Intentions*'. She is also known for translating some of important works of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

6.5.1 Virtue Ethics

Anscombe in her paper titled, '*Modern Moral Philosophy*' critiqued the way in which English moral philosophers were propounding theories which till that time had resulted in the culmination of a law concept of ethics. She critiqued philosophers like J.S. Mill and Immanuel Kant because of their reliance on 'universal principles' which ends up giving a universal moral code of conduct. English moral philosophers did not differ with each other in any manner. 'Obligation' has become the central concept in their ethics. Her submission was to re-assess and re-understand how we have been dealing with ethics and virtue. According to her, our own will is incapable in itself to support moral obligation.

She critiqued Kant's account as well as Utilitarian's. The response which she gave to English Moral Philosophers was that they accept that there is a God who sees morality and is the source of our moral obligations. Moral obligation only makes sense in relation to divine authority. If not this, then they should give up the concept of obligation as an important element of their ethical theories. Moral philosophers needs to re-assess the concepts of Intention, Desire, Pleasure, Motive, Action and Emotion which they have ignored so far. She rejected de- ontological ethical theories as well as consequentialist theories.

Check your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Does Virtue Ethics tell us what to do?

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2. What are different types of Virtues according to Aristotle?

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3. Is there a difference between Aristotelian account and Anscombe's account of Virtue Ethics? Explain.

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4. Can justice be seen as one of the important virtues? If yes, Explain.

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

So far there have been broadly two to three different ways in which one can understand/ theorize Ethics. Eudaimonism being one of the important ones and on the other hand there is Anscombe’s version of reviving Virtue Ethics. In the contemporary world, one can see lots of violations in relation to speech/ acts/ morality. Few believe that we live in a post-modernist world and therefore value no longer holds any significance. But in whatever world we live, would a life be significant enough if we live value less and virtue less. Seeing the discourses in philosophy/ of philosophy which has been male centered to a great extent. It was a women philosopher who revived Virtue Ethics in late Modern Philosophy. There are many contemporary philosophers who have been working on Ethical theories. Few among them are Alasdair Macintyre, J. Cottingham and J. Driver.

6.7 KEY WORDS

Eudaimonia: This Greek term can be translated to happiness, well-being or human flourishing.

Phronesis: (Greek Term) Intellectual Wisdom.

6.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Virtue Ethics is a branch in philosophy which deals with virtue as a central concept while trying to understand how a life should be lived. It is not concerned with duties or obligations but traits or virtues which one should possess in order to live a good life. It doesn't try to understand human life from the dialectic between deontology and consequentialism. The highest happiness is eudaimonia. Practical wisdom is necessary in order to achieve eudaimonia.
2. Yes, there is a difference between deontological ethics and virtue ethics. The term deontology is derived from the Greek word 'deon' and 'logos', While the former are ethical theories which lays emphasis on duties and morality as central to human life. According to it, few acts need to be performed as they fall under the realm of obligation, for instance 'duty for duty's sake'. One of the important philosophers of deontology ethics is Immanuel Kant.
3. Yes, virtue ethics believes in living a virtuous life. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle tried to define 'Good', and 'Supreme Good', they started philosophizing on a life which will be governed by virtues. All these philosophers made different distinctions between virtues. Few include courage, temperance, generosity, friendship, patience etc.
4. Yes, virtues do help us in the contemporary world. Whether it's about our conduct, behavior or the way we want to live our life virtues cat as an indicator for these. It has a lot of relevance in the present world as there is injustice, cowardliness, selfishness and crudeness in the present world. In order to contemplate on ourselves, on our conduct, we need to go back to Virtue Ethics. The basis of it is to know ourselves, examine our actions, and contemplate on our mistakes and not vice versa. Contemplations and examining is missing when it comes to analyzing our acts, and behavior in the present world and that's why Virtue Ethics are important as well as relevant.

Answers to check your progress II

1. No, virtue ethics is all about an ethical theory which focuses on an individual's character and conduct rather than centering itself on a set of rules. You become a virtuous person because of Eudemonia. According to Aristotle, nature has built in us the idea of virtue, the nature of being virtuous. Virtue would lead to good behavior in a human being.
2. According to Aristotle, courage is the golden mean between cowardice and recklessness. While cowardice is a deficiency of courage, and recklessness is an excess of courage, both are extremes and both are bad. In the words of Aristotle, "courage is finding the right way to act". A 'Right Action' is always a mid-point between two extremes. Like, honesty is the mean between brutal honesty and incapable of saying things which should be said. The same goes for generosity as well. One becomes virtuous while learning it, acting on it.

3. Theoretically both the theories belong to the realm of virtue ethics. Anscombe begins to theorize as a religious believer and as a virtue ethicist. She brought a re-assessment to the field of virtue ethics. She argued that either we get back to Virtue Ethics or define and understand the existence of God which was absent in the moral philosophy.
4. Yes, Justice has been perceived and conceptualized as one of the important virtues by Plato. The best aspect of this virtue is that it affects from the individual to the collective. Plato was wise enough to treat it as an end in itself and not as a means to achieve anything. Yes he did hold the position that for any society to be harmonious and virtuous these virtues are very important. And in them the most important is Justice. He perceives it as something which is so essential to a democracy as well as to any society. It clearly shows how Plato was a head of his times and that's why he philosophized so much on justice and tried to make it as adaptable as he can.

UNIT 7 DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS:

IMMANUEL KANT

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Consequentialism vs Deontology
- 7.3 Normative Ethics and Deontology
- 7.4 Deontological Theories
- 7.5 Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
- 7.6 Kant's Deontological Ethics
- 7.7 Hypothetical Imperative
- 7.8 Categorical Imperative
- 7.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.10 Key Words
- 7.11 Further Readings and references
- 7.12 Answers to check your progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are as follows,

To understand the difference between consequentialism and deontology. To know what deontological theory is and its types.

To understand the meaning and importance of Imperatives To understand Kant's Moral Philosophy

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'deontology' came into origin from the Greek term 'deon' which stands for duty and 'logos' which stands for science. Deontological theories are concerned with what people do, and not concerned about what consequences the action can have. That is why it is also called Non-Consequentialist theory. This school of thought in moral philosophy places high importance on the relationship between duty and morality of human conduct/ actions. An action is morally good because it is good in itself; it has certain aspects of goodness. That is why some acts are obligatory in nature. Terms like 'duty for duty's sake', 'honesty is good within itself' are few expressions, which can describe deontology. So, what sets aside an action as right or wrong? According to deontology (which is an ethical theory), rules or principles distinguish between right and wrong action. Expressions like 'don't lie', 'don't steal', 'don't cheat' etc. are part of it. These rules can be categorized into three types: 1) Rules that tell what we should do (obligatory), 2). Rules that tell what we should not do (forbidden), 3). Rules that tell what we

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can do (permissible but neither obligatory nor forbidden). Deontological ethics posits that is our duty to refrain from certain actions without any consideration of its consequence. If the moral principle is “do not tell lies”, it’s our duty not to lie in any condition. Deontology and Consequentialism stands in opposition to each other when it comes to analyzing human conduct/ behavior.

7.2 CONSEQUENTIALISM VS. DEONTOLOGY

As the name suggests ‘consequentialism’ measures the worth of any action after seeing its ‘consequences’. Now many who criticized consequentialism and advocated deontological Ethics, do it on the ground of subjectivity and rule of law or conduct. Few critics say that consequentialism gives a lot of room to subjectivity when they say that an action should be judged as right or wrong keeping in mind the consequences, which they produce. On the contrary, in ‘Deontological Ethics’ there is no scope of subjectivity, you do what your duties and responsibilities are, you act according to rule of law. For instance, if you have been committing infidelity on your partner and the moment he/she gets suspicious you lie about it, because you did not want to hurt him/her. From Consequentialist point, this can be termed good as the consequence of telling the lie is that the partner is not hurt by the act of infidelity. Consequentialists thus determine the worth of any action by seeing its consequences. The larger good of any act is analyzed keeping in mind the consequences or the result of that action. While in deontology it is concerned with the moral duty and moral laws, acts should be performed in accordance to moral laws. In case of the above example, the ‘Deontologists’ would call it wrong because at the end of the day you are not only cheating but you are also violating the principle of not lying. So according to Deontological Ethics, you should confess in front of him/her even though chances are bleak that he/she will forgive you. In short, your marriage may be jeopardized.

In ‘Deontological Theory’ consequences do not matter, the intention does. What is wrong would be wrong irrespective of what we do and how we do. Morally wrong action is unacceptable. You are a cheater if you are cheating on your partner irrespective of the fact that you can save your marriage, if you lie. You are a cheater as well as a liar.

These theories are also very popular along with consequentialism and Virtue Ethics, deontological ethics constitute as one of the important components of Normative Ethics. What matters most is whether you are acting according to law or not, whether you are following the rules or not. Your action would only be right when it aligns with the moral theory (moral norms). For instance, you are broke and you are starving. You cannot buy lunch for yourself. But on the road you see a man who is pretty reckless about his money. You know that if you steal money from him you can buy yourself lunch and you won’t be starving anymore. Deontological Ethics would say that because it’s wrong to steal you should not steal, even if you die because of hunger.

This theory is also critiqued for being very strict and restrictive. You cannot lie, steel or cheat because it is against the rules of morality. Deontology does what is right, even if your potential lie can benefit someone still you cannot lie because it’s morally wrong. The morality of an action is based on rules which are also called ‘Duty’. Let’s take one more instance, you are working on a project with

your office mates and you know that you haven't contributed much to the report. The day arrives and the boss chooses you to present the report. You know that no one of your group mates would be there while you make the presentation. So you decided to give most of the credits to yourself as you are in need of promotion. Here deontologists would say that what you did was wrong. Lying is wrong irrespective of whatever the situation is. By lying you violated the moral law, therefore this action is wrong.

There are obligations and duties which you need to perform irrespective of everything. Let's take one more example to understand this, you are a judge and a matter comes in your court where you have to give a judgment on a man (who used to be your friend but betrayed you badly) Now you have an opportunity of giving it back to him by declaring him guilty. But you shouldn't do this irrespective of your past problems with him. As a judge you have a professional obligation that you deliver the truth, not guilty. So your duties as a judge would be betrayed if you will use your power to make your friend suffer.

Check your progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is Deontological Ethics? Explain.

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2. Is there any difference between Consequentialism and Deontology? Elaborate.

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3. Does deontology have any relation with duties, obligations? If yes, explain.

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7.3 NORMATIVE ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY

Normative Ethics is that part of moral philosophy which deals with what is a right or wrong action. The larger division in Normative Ethics falls into *Deontological* and *Teleological* theories. While the former doesn't go for value

to undermine the action the latter does. While trying to understand Normative Ethics many philosophers make a distinction between *MetaEthics* and *Applied Ethics*. While Meta Ethics is the study of meaning and definition of moral language and moral facts while Applied Ethics deals with the study of use of ethical theories in the realm of our everyday problems.

7.4 DEONTOLOGICAL THEORIES

It should be clear till now that Deontology stands in opposition to Consequentialism and its theories. For Deontologists, whatever is morally forbidden cannot be accepted/ acted upon, irrespective of however good or useful their consequences would be. An action should be in alliance with a moral norm and not in contradiction to it. All deontologists contend that ‘goodness’ is an ‘objective’ feature of the world and a moral agent must have the capacity to recognize it and obey the moral principles without thinking about consequences.

The Deontological theories can be broadly categorized into two types: Act Deontological Ethics and Rule-Deontological Ethics. Act-Deontology applies the deontological norms by considering the individual action and its circumstances. Rule-Deontological ethics universally applies ethical norms without consideration individual action or its circumstances. For example, Act-Deontology would consider whether John’s killing of Smith was wrong or not, Rule-Deontology would simply say that killing is wrong.

The most celebrated advocate of Deontological Ethics is Immanuel Kant. His ethical theory had a deep impact on modern moral philosophy.

7.5 IMMANUEL KANT (1724- 1804)

Immanuel Kant would be one of the important philosophers in the history of western philosophy. His ideas on epistemology, metaphysics, Moral philosophy, aesthetics has been widely celebrated and discussed. His important works include *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of the Morals*.

7.6 KANT’S DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

According to Kant, your actions are of moral worth only if it coincides with your duties and duties should be performed for its own sake. Kant believed that ethical actions should be the result of following universal moral laws such as doesn’t lie, don’t cheat etc. People should follow these rules and do their duty. Many also consider it intuitive in nature, as deep down we all know what is ethical or unethical. We know that we shouldn’t lie or cheat or for that matter kill someone. But Kant says, the matter doesn’t stop here, it begins here as we shouldn’t make an exception for ourselves.

You only have to follow a certain set of rules in order to be morally good. Deontology advises not to violate the universal moral rules, Kant said that religion and morality aren’t compatible with each other, and in order to differentiate between the right and the wrong we should use ‘Reason’ or human intellect. Kant took morality on a serious note. Morality is constant according to Kant. He made a distinction between two kinds of acts:

The things we ought to do morally

The acts we do without any moral reason, law.

7.7 HYPOTHETICAL IMPERATIVE

Let's take one example to understand this; if you desire to pass an examination, you 'ought' to study. If you desire to be wealthy, you should start working hard. Kant calls them *Hypothetical Imperatives*. These are certain commands which you ought to follow if you want something. For instance, if you are hungry and want to avoid or get rid of your hunger you need to work hard.

Imperatives in commonsensical language stand for instructions, they tell us how to do, how to act. Kant distinguishes between Hypothetical and Categorical Imperative. While *hypothetical imperatives* stand for a set of rules/ commands/ instructions which tells us what to do if we want to achieve something. For instance, if one wants to get rich, the hypothetical imperative would tell her to get a job or work hard. If you want to get good marks, you have to study. Here hypothetical imperative would tell you/ instruct you to do that. Therefore it also applies to people who are interested in achieving any goal, if you aren't interested in getting good marks or getting rich you don't have to follow these hypothetical imperatives at all. That's why as the name suggests these are hypothetical in nature. Morality comes under the realm of *Categorical Imperatives*, not Hypothetical Imperatives. Modern deontological theory was introduced by Kant through his account on categorical imperative.

7.8 CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

For Kant, Categorical Imperatives are those commands which you must 'follow' irrespective of what your desires are. It is so because moral obligations are derived from human intellect or practical reason. Categorical Imperatives are our moral obligations and they need to be followed irrespective of whatever the situation is. According to Kant, it doesn't matter whether you want to be moral or not, you have to follow the commands of Categorical Imperatives. They are independent of your wishes and desires.

According to him, you don't always need religion to inform you on what is right and wrong, when you can perform this task by using your 'reason' alone. He gave three maxims of this imperative, the first one says:

“Act only according to that maxim which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction.”

The first principle here stands for *universalizability*, your acts and the nature of your acts should be universally applied. Here the term Maxim stands for rule or principle (how you need to act) whereas the term universal moral law stands for acts which must always be done in similar situations. So, before acting, you should ask yourself what's the maxim of my action? In other words, is there any general rule which stands behind while I am acting in a particular manner.

Let's take an example to understand it more clearly. Suppose, you have scored really low marks in your examination, and your mother asked you about how you performed during exams? You lie to her by telling her that you did well. Now,

comes one more hurdle that you need to get your mother's signature on your mark sheet. You being who you are know that your mother would be signing many cheques and sheets before leaving for her office. You keep your mark sheet in between those sheets and cheques. This was off course to avoid the confrontation as you have earlier lied to your mom about your marks. Surprisingly when you came back your mark sheet was signed.

Your mother was in a hurry and couldn't check that the pile of sheets had your mark sheets as well. Now what you did was lying as well as you cheated your mom. Now this action was morally wrong and by acting (lying and cheating) on it, what you did was you universalized lying and cheating. And you are also setting the precedence that everyone should always cheat and lie. If you should be able to do it, then everybody should be able to do it. Now just imagine what would happen to the world if everyone starts acting like you. That's what Kant says you cannot make an exception for your own act.

Moral Rules apply to anybody and everybody. Let's take one more example to understand it. Your brother has been bankrupted and he is hiding at your place. You are aware of the seriousness of the situation and therefore you tell your brother to feel safe at your place. In between you come to know that police have been looking for him, they have begun their search operations for him. After some time, you see that there was a bell on your door, as expected it was police. Knowing that you are his sister they decided to contact you as well. Now you lied to the police by telling them your brother isn't here, inferring that the police have arrived, your brother panicked and decided to run away from your place and he did that. After a while on the road the police caught him.

Now according to Kant, you are responsible for your brother's misery. Because to begin with your lie is the origin of it, it happened because of your lie. If you could have told the truth to the police, then your brother would have been solely responsible for his acts. What you could have done is you could have refused to answer when the police asked you about him; you could have changed the topic etc. Here by lying you violated the universal moral law.

The second maxim of Kant focuses on how human beings should be treated. In his words, "Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a mere means."

For Kant, we use objects and things as mere means all the time. I might use this pen to write; therefore, pen becomes a mere means to write something. Pen becomes the mere means to achieve the end of writing. Once the ink of your pen is finished you would throw your pen, as no longer it would serve any purpose to you. Kant says it's alright to use things and objects like this but not human beings. Human beings are 'End-in – themselves'. No human being can be treated as an object for some use. On the contrary, human beings are an end in themselves. Humans exist for themselves and 'in-themselves'.

Kant never said that we don't use each other as means. We all are human beings and we are dependent on each other, we rely on each other. For example, you might use your mother's skill of 'cooking' while having food, as she is cooking food for you. You might use your father's money to pay your tuition fee. But we

shouldn't be using each other as mere means. We are human beings, rational enough. We shouldn't see others according to our own benefit. When we treat a human being as a means to achieve an end we end up surpassing her will, autonomy and intellect and reason. If you do this, you are violating the second imperative of Kant. Moral truths are universal and you don't need a God to govern it.

The final and third maxim of categorical Imperative says,

“Act as though your maxims you should become a legislator of universal laws.”

Here Kant asks us to remember that every time we act, we are contributing to the idea and nature of act and acting. We are making it normal and we always have the choice to act according to universal moral laws. Kant's moral philosophy rests on 'free Will'. Your actions should have Universality, they should be end in themselves and autonomous. According to Kant, if you are committing an emotional, physical, mental infidelity to your partner and very conveniently you are hiding it from her. Then you are universalizing the act of 'lying' and 'cheating'. You should be comfortable if everybody does it.

Kant was astonished to see how and to what extent at that time people were blinded by religion. He thought that it's high time that people shun their religious beliefs, stop seeing God as the highest guardian of goodness. Therefore, the sovereignty of religion should be replaced by reason. He said that inherently every religion talks about how one should lead/ live an ethical life? Therefore, he came up with the concept of *Categorical Imperative*. This concept was first approved and discussed in his text *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. According to Categorical imperatives, a person should act according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. This is something which most of the religions advocate. No religion would teach you to use a human being as mere means.

These imperatives show you 'mirror' it tells you how you should Act. This is your rational self. The will to do the good thing is called 'Good Will'. Let's take one example to understand the concept of Good will. You are waiting for your bus at the bus stop and you saw a woman's wallet was lying down on the road. You can see it clearly because she was taking out her mobile phone from her bag that is when her wallet fell down. Now the larger point is what would you do in a situation like this? So you decided to pick her wallet and give it to her. Why would you help a stranger? You did this because you wanted to be in the good books of those women, you did it because you could see that few people in the line are observing all this.

According to Kant, acts like these aren't driven by goodwill. The acts performed under Goodwill are good in themselves and they aren't performed for some other sake or expecting something in return. Good will is something which we do in accordance with moral reasons. We shouldn't act in accordance to what others are saying, what God and religion tell us. We should act in accordance with moral rules. The moral rules come from own intellect and reasoning.

7.9 LET US SUM UP

In the present unit we tried to look into the larger sphere of Normative Ethics, here we tried to understand how deontological ethics is being placed in the larger realm of Normative Ethics. We tried to understand what imperatives are and

what the difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives are. All these were to understand that how can we be Good? How can we lead an ethical life?

Check your progress II

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
- b) check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Who was Immanuel Kant? Was he a Moral Philosopher?

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2. Is there a difference between Categorical and Hypothetical Imperatives?

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3. Why do we need to act in accordance with Moral law?

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7.10 KEY WORDS

Deontology : The term ‘deontology’ came into origin from the Greek term ‘deon’ which stands for duty and ‘logos’ which stands for science. Deontological theories are concerned with what people do, and not concerned about what consequences the action can have.

Categorical Imperatives : Categorical Imperatives are our moral obligations and they need to be followed irrespective of whatever the situation is.

Hypothetical Imperatives : *hypothetical imperatives* stands for a set of rules/ commands/ instructions which tells us what to do if we want to achieve something.

Good Will : The will to do the good thing is called ‘Good Will’.

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Podcast/ Online links

https://philosophynow.org/podcasts/The_Hidden_World_of_Immanuel_Kant

7.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your Progress I

1. The term Deontological comes from the Greek words, *Deon* and *Logic*, it stands for duty and science. This school of thought in philosophy places high importance on the relationship between duty and the morality of the human conduct/ actions. An action is morally good because it is good in itself, it has been acted in accordance with Moral law.
2. Consequentialism and Deontology are two different sets of ethical theories under Normative Ethics. Whereas the former says that the acts would be understood after seeing their consequences and the latter talks about moral laws, duties and responsibilities while analyzing human conduct.
3. Yes, Deontology has a relationship between duties and obligations as it believes that if a human being would act according to her duties and obligations in short if she would follow the moral law that act would be good in nature.

Answers to Check your Progress II

1. Immanuel Kant was a German Philosopher. Yes, he is known as a Moral Philosopher. Apart from Epistemology, Metaphysics, he has written extensively on Moral Philosophy. In fact, deontology is widely accepted because of him.
2. Yes, there is a difference between categorical and hypothetical imperatives. While the former deals with universalizable unconditional actions the latter talks about certain goals which you need to set for yourself, if you want to accomplish them, you need to follow these instructions.
3. Well, we all need to act in accordance with Moral Law because it is universal in nature, it has goodness beneath it and it talks about rightful actions.

UNIT 8 CONSEQUENTIALIST ETHICS: J. S. MILL*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Consequentialism
- 8.3 Types of Consequentialism
- 8.4 J.S. Mill's Utilitarianism
- 8.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.6 Key Words
- 8.7 Further Readings and References
- 8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will discuss these following issues,

The arguments offered by the consequentialists on how one ought to act and what makes an action moral or immoral.

Explanation of what is consequentialism, what are the different types of consequentialism.

A detailed account of the classical consequentialism or Utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The central question of moral philosophy is how one ought to act. At every point in our life we face such situations which make us think about how we should act in this situation morally. It is the normative ethics which seeks to set norms or standards for the moral conduct. We often make normative judgments like what is good or bad and what kind of way of life is morally good or morally bad. There are varieties of different types of theories that have been developed to understand moral practice. Different theories provide different set of rules or parameters for moral action. Normative theories can be categorized in to two broad categories— deontological and teleological. Deontological theories primarily focus on arriving at principles which will guide human conduct while teleological theories try to determine the value of certain kinds of action and posit them as an end to be achieved. Deontological approach defines duty by following the principles whereas teleological approach tries to do it on the basis of the consequences of actions. It is for this reason that Teleological approach is also called as Consequentialism.

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Let us take an example of passive euthanasia, to understand the difference between different normative theories. There are different set of arguments provided by different theories to the question, “Can passive euthanasia be morally permissible?” Suppose both deontological theorists and consequentialists argue that it is morally impermissible, this doesn’t mean that they are giving same rules to argue for the same thing, rather, they would argue on different grounds. As deontologists would maintain that it is intrinsically wrong to put an end to someone’s life, they would argue that passive euthanasia is wrong even if a person is suffering. Putting end to someone’s life or one’s own life is intrinsically wrong for them, hence it is morally impermissible. While consequentialists, would provide totally different sets of rules to prove the same conclusion. According to them passive euthanasia would be morally impermissible because there are cases of abuses of its permissibility or it does not promote the best outcome/ consequence. Thus, different theories provide different sets of rules or norms to act morally.

This unit will focus on the consequentialist ethics. Consequentialism holds that whether an action is morally right or wrong depends only on the consequences of that action. All Consequentialists are united by the central idea that the moral assessment of action depends on how much good such things provide and how much bad do they avoid. Thus, from a consequentialist standpoint, a morally right act is one that will produce a good outcome, or consequence.

The unit will start by explaining consequentialism and different types of consequentialism in order to create a background for discussing Mill’s Utilitarianism.

8.2 CONSEQUENTIALISM

Consequentialism is a type of normative ethical theory which maintains that what morally matters about an action is the kind of consequences it produces. What is of primary moral importance about an action is what it brings about or the consequences it produces. The Consequentialists maintains that what morally matters about an action is what causal difference it makes, or what it can be expected to bring about. Though, sometimes we are not certain about the consequences that an action will produce, still, we can anticipate its overall consequences based on our previous experiences or from the experiences of others. When we morally evaluate an action or when we think about what to do, what we look for is the overall difference that an action makes or that it is likely to make.

Consequentialism holds that the aim of morality is to guide us doing actions which will bring overall good consequences. There might be difference in identifying specific actions which brings overall consequences. But there is an agreement that we can morally evaluate any action i.e., whether the action is morally good or bad, on the basis of what kind consequence an action is producing. If an action fails to produce the overall good/welfare it will be considered a bad action otherwise it will be considered a good action. William Shaw describes that “what distinguishes consequentialist from non-consequentialist ethical theories is the insistence that when it comes to rightness or wrongness, nothing matters but the results of our actions” (Shaw 2006; p. 5).

We can think of some of the examples that consequentialist would evoke. Like, acts of honesty are more likely to bring better consequences than dishonesty. Acts of charity would always produce consequences which are good. Not harming others (innocent people) tend to achieve overall better consequences than doing it. From these examples it can be understood that the overall consequences of an action determines whether that action is right or wrong.

Our actions or our decisions for doing moral actions are always influenced by consequential thinking. One should not harm an innocent because it will deprive the person state of being from what he/she was earlier without being harmed. We should help people in need because it would bring welfare and happiness in their life. It can be argued that if we analyze from consequentialist approach then we can see that wrong/bad actions have necessarily bad consequences. We do not necessarily need to focus on the action itself in order to morally evaluate an action. We can determine whether the action is good or bad from its consequences.

Let us consider a specific issue of assisted suicide and see how the consequentialists would argue in favor of and against it. Let us suppose that needless suffering is to be minimized. On this basis, the case for assisted suicide looks quite strong from consequentialist framework. Many people maintain that assisted suicide is intrinsically wrong; it is wrong even if it would prevent suffering and even the person wishes to die. Even consequentialist could agree that assisted suicide is wrong, but would arrive at the conclusion on different grounds. For example, it might be on the basis of concerns about abuses of its permissibility, or because it might encourage those who are ill or disabled to think of themselves as selfish burdens to others, and the like. It would be because there are reasons to think that it does not promote the best outcome.

Most of the consequentialists argue that we ought to maximize the good effects. The idea is that producing more good is better than producing less. This 'good' is not restricted only to actions rather it is also applied to rules, policies, motives and dispositions. Usually, the effect, that is, the good to be brought about, is understood in terms of happiness or well-being. Following upon this, some have argued that Epicurus was an early consequentialist due to his development of hedonism. Epicurus limits the scope of the relevant consequences to the self, hence, he was considered as articulating the brand of consequentialism which is known as Egoism. Egoism is that one should promote the good, but this is understood as what is good for the self and not the overall good. This kind of consequentialism known as 'Egoism' or 'Particularistic Consequentialism' which holds that one only takes into consideration how the consequences of an act will affect oneself or a given group like one's family or friends. Here, moral rightness depends on the consequences for an individual agent or a limited group. On the contrary, Universal Consequentialism holds that one takes into account how the consequences of an act will affect all the parties involved. Moral rightness depends on the consequences for all affected people. Everyone is equally important, and one should give equal weight to each person's good or utility/welfare (all who count equally). Since Utilitarianism assumes that all who count should count equally, it is important to consider the question of who should count or who should be ascribed moral status. It is interesting to note that prominent utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham and Peter Singer hold that all sentient beings should be

ascribed moral status, in the sense that moral agents have duties towards all beings who can experience pleasure and pain.

The first systematic account of utilitarianism has been offered by Jeremy Bentham. Classical consequentialism (utilitarianism) holds that morally appropriate behaviour will not harm others it will rather increase happiness or 'utility'. Hence, the fundamental principle of utilitarianism is the principle of utility, i.e., the morally right action is the one that produces the best overall consequences with regard to the utility or welfare of all the affected parties. According to Jeremy Bentham, the right act or policy is the one that causes 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', which means, maximizing the total utility or welfare of the majority of all the affected parties. The question arises that how do we know which states of affairs are valuable and which states of affairs are not? Utilitarianism tells us that it is the happiness or well-being of sentient beings that is the valuable thing. Jeremy Bentham holds that good is the experience or sensation of pleasure and absence of pain. While, according to the other classical utilitarian, J.S. Mill, good is that which promotes entire range of valuable mental states, and mental states can be valuable without being pleasurable. He even talks about higher and lower pleasures. (J.S. Mill's account of utilitarianism will be discussed at length in the further sections).

Check Your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is Consequentialism?

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2. Define Utilitarianism. Give example.

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8.3 TYPES OF CONSEQUENTIALISM

There are many types of Consequentialism which are connected with the focal thesis i.e., consequences of action is what matters most for the assessment of

whether an action is good or bad. There is a standard division within consequentialist views between Act and Rule consequentialism.

ACT CONSEQUENTIALISM focuses on the action which brings in overall good consequences or bad consequences to determine the moral status of the action.

RULE CONSEQUENTIALISM focuses or tries to come up with some rules or principles if applied would produce overall better consequences.

Act utilitarianism believes that we should assess whether an act is right or wrong by evaluating the utility of the action. This means that we should consider the act as a good act which produces overall consequences for the affected parties. When we face a choice between alternative courses of action, we should choose the course of action that has the best expected consequences for all (or the majority of) the affected parties. Thus, act consequentialism prescribes the following decision procedure for assessment and choice of alternative courses of action on the basis of the principle of utility: Identify alternative courses of actions like X1, X2, and X3 and so on. Identify the expected consequences of these alternative courses of action, like X1's consequences, X2's consequences and so on. Here the assessment and choice of action is on the basis of the principle of utility. In order to decide what is right and wrong to do, we need to have knowledge of several things, like we should know all available courses of actions and their consequences. We must put a value on each of the available courses of action. We must compare these different courses of action in order to decide which action has the best expected consequences. This seems almost impossible to look for all possible alternatives; here we can apply our previous experience to look for best alternative.

While Act consequentialism sounds appealing at the outset, it has some troubling implications. If you've ever said, "The ends do not justify the means," you were expressing a non-consequentialist sentiment. There are many actions that consequentialism entails are perfectly fine, or even obligatory, that many people think are very wrong. Suppose a doctor is monitoring five patients who are in urgent need of some vital organs in order to survive. In that moment a person with sound health and good physique is visiting the doctor for his routine checkup. Suddenly, the doctor thought that if I operate this person with good health and provide organs to the five patients, these five people will be able to attain good health. In that process one person (with good health) will die. An act-consequentialist would not hesitate to justify the doctor's decision. But people in general would not be able to justify it.

The problem faced by rule-consequentialism might be resolved by the rule-consequentialism. Rule consequentialism does not focus on individual actions rather it tries to formulate rules or principles which are more likely to bring overall good consequences in the society for the majority of people.

Rule Consequentialism holds, that we need to determine whether an act is good or bad on the basis of the rule or principles that we have arrived through the principle of utility. So, if we have framed a rule that "Lying is bad and we should not lie" then moral agents should do not lie not because it is his/her individual preference but it is rule that needs to be followed if we want have overall good of

the society. Here, it is not about the individual action but it is about the rule or norm following which overall welfare can be achieved. Rule consequentialism talks about two ways of following it.

- 1) Moral agents needs to assess different rules in a particular situation and apply the rule or norm which is likely to achieve overall best consequences.
- 2) The rule or norm a person gets from the first step for a particular situation he/she should follow it irrespective of the thought that an alternative action might achieve better consequences than this. For example, if not lying is the rule then one should not lie even if lying would bring overall better consequences.

Thus, according to rule consequentialism, we should not simply perform the individual action that will produce good consequences. Instead, we should follow rules that, when followed, lead to good consequences.

Check Your Progress II

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the two types of consequentialism?

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2. Define Act Consequentialism in detail.

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3. Define Rule Consequentialism. Give two-steps involved in rule consequentialism.

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8.4. J. S. MILL'S UTILITARIANISM

John Stuart Mill was a follower of Bentham, he greatly admired Bentham's work even though he disagreed with some of Bentham's claims particularly on the nature of 'happiness'. As Bentham held that there were no qualitative differences between pleasures, only quantitative ones. While for Mill there is a qualitative difference between pleasures. The ethical theory of John Stuart Mill is most extensively articulated in his classical text *Utilitarianism* (1861). Its goal is to justify the utilitarian principle as the foundation of morals. This principle says actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote overall human happiness. So, Mill focuses on consequences of actions and not on rights or ethical sentiments.

Mill has tried to define the purpose of morality as to bring a particular state of existence. Mill tries to argue that characterizing action simply as good and bad is not enough but we need to find out what is/are the things which makes the actions a moral nature i.e., good or bad. People might not agree with Mill as to what is or should be the thing on the basis of which moral actions should be assessed. Mill asserts that this essential feature as the utility of actions which is necessary for human existence and makes an action worthy of moral assessment.

Against the misconception that utility is opposed to pleasure Mill has tried to define utility as pleasure and absence of pain. In that way the principle of utility is also termed as Greatest Happiness Principle. This principle holds that "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure" (Mill 1969: p. 210). From this perspective avoidance of pain and seeking pleasure is end-in-themselves and they are desirable for their own sake. Therefore, any other action, event, principle etc is desirable because they are means to achieve the end.

A general criticism that has been put forth against Mill is that considering pleasure as the only motto of life means that one is reducing the meaning of life to pleasure. Mill has responded to it by distinguishing the quality of human pleasure from that of animals. He has emphasized the point that human kind gets pleasure from exercising their higher faculties and they will always be unpleasant if they would not cultivate them. So, happiness for human kind is the signifier of functioning of their higher faculties. Thus, Mill in formulating his utilitarian stand focuses on the quality of pleasure.

He states,

What I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account (Mill 2015: p.122).

In addition to that Mill believed that the standard criterion to evaluate a moral act is by considering pleasure of all the people involved/affected by the act and not the agent's own happiness alone. So, one should not consider his/her own pleasure as superior than the pleasure of others. Mill advocates equal treatment of all human beings, whether rich or poor, black or white, in terms of recognizing the value of their pleasure.

Mill also talks about motivations for doing moral acts. He mentioned about two kinds of motivations – external and internal. External motivations are common in nature which can be associated with any other moral framework. For example, pressure from closed ones, divine sanctions might motivate or societal disapproval etc. On the other hand internal motivations come from one's conscience and the inner feelings when a person faces certain situation. For Mill internal motivations are stronger than the external motivations as internal features are ingrained within the being. From internal motivations natural moral outlook grows and people naturally realize the moral obligations. And, Mill has tried to show that how utility in association with happiness creates a strong moral foundation within human beings (Mill 2015: pp. 140-147).

Thus, Mill argues that the moral foundation of utilitarianism is embedded within the nature of human beings, more specifically in their social nature. Mill has opined that society should inculcate and promote this moral orientation through different means such as education.

In this way Mill argued for utilitarian moral theory in his book *Utilitarianism*. In an effort to respond to criticisms of the doctrine, Mill, not only argued in favor of the basic principles of Jeremy Bentham but also offered several significant improvements to its structure, meaning, and application. Although the progress of moral philosophy has been limited by its endless disputes over the reality and nature of the highest good, Mill assumed from the outset, everyone can agree that the consequences of human actions contribute importantly to their moral value.

Check Your Progress III

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What does Mill understand from the concept of 'First principle'?

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8.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit tried to give an account of consequentialist ethics in moral philosophy. Consequentialism is a type of normative ethical theory which maintains that what morally matters about an action is the kind of consequences it produces. It is of two types, Act and Rule Consequentialism: Act Consequentialism refers to a

family of Consequentialist theories according to which a moral act is one that maximizes (total or average) utility. Whereas, Rule Consequentialism refers to a family of Consequentialist theories according to which a moral act is one that is prescribed by the rule (or set of rules) that, if generally applied, would maximize (total or average) utility. This Unit moves further to a more specific theory of Utilitarianism put forward by John Stuart Mill. Mill describes Utilitarian theory as Greatest Happiness theory according to which, “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.” Mill talks about qualitative pleasure hence his theory is known as qualitative utilitarianism in contrast to Bentham’s quantitative utilitarianism.

8.6 KEY WORDS

Consequences: Results brought about, here it is meant the ultimate result that is brought about by an action.

Utility Principle: It holds that the morally right action is the one that produces the best overall consequences with regard to the utility or welfare of all the affected parties.

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8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Consequentialism is a type of normative ethical theory which maintains that what morally matters about an action is the kind of consequences it produces. Whether an action or practice is morally right or permissible depends upon its consequences. Most of the consequentialists argue that we ought to

maximize the good effects. The simplest form of consequentialism is classical (hedonistic) utilitarianism, which asserts that an action is right or wrong according to whether it maximizes the net balance of pleasure over pain in the universe.

2. Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism which holds the principle of utility, i.e., the morally right action is the one that produces the best overall consequences with regard to the utility or welfare of all the affected parties.

The famous example of Utilitarianism is the Trolley example. Imagine there is a trolley heading toward a group of 5 workers on the tracks. You are sitting in a control center several miles away, and you have a button that can switch the trolley onto another track where there's only 1 worker. If you flip the switch, one person will die. If you do nothing, 5 people will die. Should you flip the switch? 1 death is better than 5 deaths, so if you have to choose, you should try to minimize the loss of life by flipping the switch. This is an example of utilitarian reasoning.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The two types of consequentialism are Act consequentialism and Rule Consequentialism.
2. Act utilitarianism implies that one should assess whether an act is right or wrong directly in view of the principle of utility. This means that the morally right action is the one that has the best overall consequences for the welfare or utility of the majority of the affected parties. When we face a choice between alternative courses of action, we should choose the course of action that has the best expected consequences for all (or the majority of) the affected parties. Thus, act utilitarianism prescribes the following decision procedure for assessment and choice of alternative courses of action on the basis of the principle of utility: Identify alternative courses of actions like X1, X2, and X3 and so on. Identify the expected consequences of these alternative courses of action, like X1's consequences, X2's consequences and so on. Here the assessment and choice of action is on the basis of the principle of utility. In order to decide what is right and wrong to do, we need to have knowledge of several things, like we should know all available courses of actions and their consequences. We must put a value on each of the available courses of action. We must compare these different courses of action in order to decide which action has the best expected consequences. This seems almost impossible to look for all possible alternatives, here we can apply our previous experience to look for best alternative.
3. Rule Consequentialism holds that the morally right action must be in accordance with moral rules or norms that can be justified on the basis of the principle of utility. Agents should decide what to do in concrete situations by applying rules whose acceptance will produce the best consequences. The question is not which action will produce the greatest utility, but which moral norm or rule will produce the greatest utility or welfare. The two-step procedure involved in rule consequentialism are:
 - 1) An assessment of moral norms (or rules) on the basis of the principle of utility: One should assess which moral norms that will produce the best overall consequences for all the affected parties.

- 2) An assessment of the rightness and wrongness of actions in concrete situations in view of the moral norms that are justified in the first step: One should determine how to act in a concrete situation on the basis of the moral norms justified in step one – even if an alternative course of action will have better consequences for all the affected parties in a given situation.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. Mill uses the concept of “first principles” and foundations of morality throughout his text *Utilitarianism*. With this notion, Mill asserts that it is not enough simply to characterize actions as good or evil; rather, there must be something about these actions that gives them a moral nature, and a reason why terms like “good” and “evil” have such resonance in the first place. People have not been able to agree about what this essential principle of morality is, or why it is so special. Thus, he, in his text has attempted to identify this foundation once and for all—namely, to identify it as the concept of utility— and then to demonstrate why this moral foundation is so extraordinary, so central to our existence as human beings.

UNIT 9 CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ETHICAL THEORIES*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Major Ethical Theories: An Overview
- 9.3 Critical Appraisal of Utilitarianism
- 9.4 Critical Appraisal of Deontological Ethics
- 9.5 Critical Appraisal of Virtue Ethics
- 9.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.7 Key Words
- 9.8 Further Readings and References
- 9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Unit are as follows:

To understand the basic themes and presuppositions of major ethical (normative) theories; Utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics,

To analyze these ethical theories,

To critically examine these ethical theories.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will primarily focus on critically analyzing the theories of normative ethics discussed so far, namely, Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, and Kant's deontological ethics. These theories are the major theories of ethics that have dominated the human psyche by providing reasons for their actions for ages. The action-guiding principle for our actions provided by these theories is assisting us in understanding questions such as what is right and what is wrong? How to decide what is good or bad in a particular situation? And, related to it, the overarching question of how to live peacefully in a society. Living in peace is directly connected with how to be good as an individual and as a society.

Critical reflections of these theories will help us to reformulate and reorganize our action-guiding principles for a better living.

9.2 MAJOR ETHICAL THEORIES: AN OVERVIEW

All the theories of ethics intend to provide the answer to the question – how one ought to act in a situation involving others. Actions of a free agent are always

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subject to moral evaluation of whether an action is right or wrong/good or bad. Ethical theories help us determine our actions by providing some action-guiding principles. For example, we ought to act in ways that will maximize the overall utility (Utilitarianism in a general sense). Moral assessment of our actions is necessary for building a peaceful society. People in societies full of immoral or ethically bad people will not lead their lives peacefully as forgery, corruption, stealing, murder, etc. will be rampant. As individuals, we need to understand principles that help us to be good individuals. Thus we need to define and understand the ethical principles through which people's conduct would largely be assessed and judged.

As a theory of ethics, Utilitarianism provides the perspective that the utility of an action/policy/law/rule should be the basis of determining whether an action is ethically good or bad. The nature of utility an action or a policy produces ought to be considered for its moral evaluation. The moral judgment of an action is not dependent upon the action in-itself but the good or bad it brings. This theory opines that we should assess the overall outcomes of an action or what an action produces or the overall consequences it has to pass a value judgment about the action. This approach does not take into consideration the value of an action in itself. Speaking the truth itself might have intrinsic value apart from what good it might bring. Understanding good and bad within the utilitarian framework has been understood, associating it with pleasure and pain. An action is right or wrong is dependent on how much overall happiness or unhappiness it produces. Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick are the three major proponents of this theory.

Deontological theories of ethics provide the understanding that ethical norms or principles are of prime importance. Moral norms and laws are required to define the duties of a moral agent. Immanuel Kant, the major advocate of this theory, provides the understanding that we ought to morally assess the action or a policy in-itself through the prism of already defined rules and laws and not its consequences for the value judgment of an action. Apart from that, this theory holds that it is not rational to discharge one's duty for the sake of any other element/motivation than to fulfill one's duty. "Duty for the sake of Duty" is one of the central tenets of this theory. Breaking the ethical law e.g., it is wrong to lie, is wrong in any circumstances even if that saves a person's life. Circumstantial or consequential benefits are not significant for making a moral judgment on an action. People's intention for doing an action holds an essential factor for this theory for judging an action.

In contrast to both the theories mentioned above where actions or policies proposed to assess for making a moral judgment, Virtue ethics holds that it is crucial to evaluate a person's character and following that the action s/he is doing. Being just, honest, truthful, courageous and kind to others are the character traits that individuals should develop to be a good person and do good. Lying, deceiving, and betrayal are the traits discouraged from being cultivated in one's character. This ethical approach explains that if individual beings of society are good, society will eventually become a good society. Virtue ethicists find it more appropriate to focus on the internal aspect of individual beings than on the external for proper assessment of their moral character.

All the normative principles provided aim to achieve a good society by guiding people's actions and their character. But these theories also face some criticism.

In the following sections, we will critically evaluate the principles of all the above-mentioned theories of ethics.

Check Your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
- b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the principle that Utilitarianism provides for ethical assessment of an action?

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2. Discuss in brief the major difference between Utilitarianism and Deontology.

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9.3 CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF UTILITARIANISM

James Rachel (2012) points out that Utilitarianism, as a theory of ethics, can be understood by understanding three of its locus points. First, the consequence of an action is the only thing that matters for assessing any action morally. Second, we should measure the consequences of action based on how much pleasure and pain it produces in terms of its quantity and quality. Third, in assessing consequences, each individual’s pleasure and pain should get an equal amount of consideration (Rachel, 2012: p. 110). There should not be any discrimination in appraising pleasure and pain based on an individual’s position in society, class, caste, religion, sex, etc.

Bentham argues that the central aim of morality is to make the world happy as much as possible. This principle requires individuals to produce maximum happiness in any situation if s/he is to be a morally good person. Maximum happiness means it should make people happier, as many as possible. In addition to that, to be morally good, a particular action must produce happiness over sorrow; otherwise, we should consider it as bad.

For Mill, happiness is the end, which is desirable, and every other thing is desirable to reach that end. For example, my desire for food will surely fill my empty stomach, but ultimately feeding myself will make me happy. Otherwise, starvation would lead to a painful situation, and we should avoid it.

Following Rachel, the first criticism that comes into our mind is that is pleasure all that matters for morality? Adding to that, can we morally judge our actions/policies/principles solely based on how much pain and pleasure produces? For

example, is it right on the part of a group of students to rag/torture the new student in class just because it is pleasurable for them? Is it a good or right thing to lie before the court of law as it would make the maximum number of people happy? We can also understand the magnitude of these questions by turning them around. Is everything that produces maximum happiness or pleasure morally right or good? In that regard, killing an innocent person would also amount to a good act if it produces happiness among the maximum number of people. We can cite another often-used example against Utilitarianism here. Suppose a person used to peep into a family's bathroom, but none of the family members is aware of it. Whatever kind of pleasure that person is getting from peeping, is without harming anybody, and not in the victim's knowledge. Pain or sorrow is not exceeding pleasure as the victims are unaware of it. So, the action produces maximum happiness, at least to the extent the person is not getting caught. Now, the question is, can we consider the act as a good act? Utilitarians would answer this question positively. Even if we do not bring in the concerns of justice and violations of people's right to privacy, our general understanding of good and bad would consider the act as a bad one.

Related to the point mentioned above, we can argue against Utilitarianism that the life of a human being is constituted and guided by many factors, and one among them is happiness/pleasure. Considering happiness as the only guiding factor for various human actions is giving excessive prominence to it. Other elements of human life like justice, truth, rights are seemingly secondary to happiness in the Utilitarian framework. One may object that justice or rights are values if established, ultimately leading to a happy society. It might be the case. But justice should prevail in society irrespective of whether its consequences would make the majority of people happy or not. For example, a vicious criminal should get harsh punishment even if that event might make maximum people sad.

We can substantiate the accusation against Utilitarianism that it advocates the majority's rule by raising the issues of violation of rights and justice. For example, if there is a gross human rights violation in a country and that too gives pleasure to the majority of the people, Utilitarians would face difficulty in condemning it as wrong. This kind of situation becomes complex when the headcount of people for proving the majority (as pleasure of the maximum number of people does matter in Utilitarianism) and minority is like 60 and 40. The moral decision about good and bad would favor the majority as they have the maximum numbers. The pertinent question that arises here is whether morality, i.e., whether an action or event or policy is good or bad, depends on just numbers? Any hostile action that affects adversely to the 40 people is still wrong. Utilitarianism seems not to accommodate these kinds of concerns in the theory.

We generally understand the utilitarian approach as consequentialist. That means what matters for the ethical assessment of action is the result/consequences of the action. If the output failed to produce pleasure over pain, we should consider it as a bad action. If the results make maximum people happy, then the action is good. However, philosophers like Amartya Sen have defended this kind of an approach where we need to assess an action's results before doing it. He argues that to avoid negative consequences of a particular action we need to foresee (which we can do easily) the relevant consequences that action might bring and then decide whether we ought to do it or not. What action is producing is important

to consider in passing a moral judgment about the action in-itself. But the objection against this approach is that consequences are not the only thing based on which we should give a value judgment. In many cases, the action in-itself might be right or wrong. For example, torturing a child is wrong in-itself irrespective of the consequences it might bring.

The approach of maximizing utility in terms of pleasure gives Utilitarianism a relativistic framework. No right act or good act can be considered as right or good universally in all circumstances. Suppose action ‘A’ is a good act because, in specific cases, it produces maximum overall pleasure rather than pain. The same action ‘A’ might not produce maximum overall pleasure in a different circumstance. Accordingly, we would not consider it as a good act. So, a particular action might get different value judgments depending upon the context and situation. Murder, treason, corruption, cheating, lying cannot be outrightly discredited as wrong or something bad. They might produce maximum pleasure among the maximum number of people.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Why do philosophers criticize Utilitarianism over its consequential nature?

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2. Why is Utilitarianism considered as relativistic?

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9.4 CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

Deontological ethics, unlike Utilitarianism, primarily emphasizes moral duties guided by pure reason. Utilitarianism, as we have seen above, tries to define that through the calculation of overall utility measured in terms of pleasure and pain. Immanuel Kant, the foremost advocate of deontological ethics, argues that moral rules or principles are ends-in-themselves. Performing duties according to those rules should not be for the sake of any other objectives, in other words, “duty for the sake of duty” and nothing else. Kant has explained this with the help of the distinction between “Hypothetical Imperatives” and “Categorical Imperatives”. Hypothetical imperatives are those “oughts” that an individual performs for the sake of achieving something s/he desires. For example, if I want to pass the exam

with good marks, I ought to study hard. Or, if I wish not to be affected by the Corona Virus, I ought to maintain social distancing. The should-ness or oughtness of these actions depends upon the desires one has to achieve some or other goals. For Kant, the should-ness or oughtness used to define moral obligations cannot be subjective and vary with the change of an individual's desires in life. They should be '*categorical*' in nature; one must follow them irrespective of his/her desires. Categorical Imperatives or Practical Law should be unconditional, and they should not be followed because of reaching any other end, but because they themselves set ends. For example, no one should lie. In this example, lying is prohibited, not because it will harm others or break their trust, etc. but, in the context of Kantian categorical imperative, lying is not permitted because it is bad in itself. The rule is no rational being should lie in any circumstance.

Maxims play a vital role in Kantian philosophy (Philosophy of Kant) in deciding the moral law. Kant's first maxim is to provide objectivity in an ethical rule as it is already being considered that subjective rules cannot be a moral law. The first maxim demands an individual to act on rules, which s/he can adhere to as a universal law. For example, you made a promise to your friend without any intention to keep it, and eventually, you broke the promise. The question here is, can you adhere to the idea that every friend/person in the world ought to break promises? If you cannot adhere to it, then you cannot consider it a maxim for the moral law. Thus you ought not to do it.

Similarly, people should not lie; they ought to speak the truth; people should not cheat, kill an innocent, etc. can be considered moral law and should be followed universally without breaking it. In addition to that, the will to fulfill these duties should not to achieve any other end but only to perform these duties and nothing else. One should not help a person because s/he needs some favour from that person or s/he loves helping people. In both cases helping is motivated by the subjective will. What if someone has no such intention to get a favour or someone does not love helping? Will helping be as obligatory on them as on persons with some subjective will? Kant opines that it will not. Thus, if help is considered a moral duty, people need to discharge it irrespective of whether they have any subjective element or not. They should fulfill their duties with the spirit of doing "duty for the sake of duty" and nothing else.

In this context, the primary question against Kant is that what if speaking truth, which everyone ought to adhere universally as a moral duty, will lead to the murder of an innocent person? Which one, telling the truth or saving an innocent human's life, may be considered as primary duty? Kantian ethics, in general, is not consequential. So, people might opine that one should not lie in any circumstance even if that leads to an innocent being's death. By discharging one's duty of not lying, one may uphold the moral law, but can we say that the person is not guilty of the murder? At least, s/he has participated in the event in such a way that it leads to the murder of an innocent person. So, it seems that Kantian deontology has not adequately addressed the problem when a person faces a moral dilemma.

Not considering the consequences of an action in formulating a moral law might be seen as a problem for this approach of ethics. We can understand the issue through the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. Krishna was trying to convince Arjuna that it is his duty as a Kshatriya or member of the warrior caste to fight for a just cause even if that is against his own people.

He should not worry about the consequences. On the other hand, Arjuna hesitated to wage war because he was foreseeing that war would result in huge loss of innocent human lives. He was foreseeing the consequences of war and considering it unjustified to act in a way that would lead to a massive loss of innocent lives.. The above example shows that there are occasions where we need to consider the relevant consequences an action might bring before making a judgment about whether to act that way or not. As human beings, we are limited and confined within many boundaries, and our 'situatedness' is one among them. We cannot objectively apply a moral principle to make a moral judgment or act in all life's different situations. Assessment of the situation and considering the relevant factors and relevant consequences of our actions are important for making a moral value judgment. Complete neutrality towards the consequences of actions might sometimes make our actions unethical.

Another point of criticism against Kantian deontology is the issue of motivation for doing an ethical act. People ought to discharge their duties only for the sake of fulfilling their obligations and nothing else. Kant has tried to prevent any element which will make an ethical act subjective. People might have different motivations for fulfilling their duties. Someone might love humanity thus, he helps people in need; someone might get some benefit by telling the truth; otherwise, he wouldn't have. Kant opines that we cannot consider these actions as ethical. It is because ethical principles cannot be subjective and depend on individual preferences. A person loves humanity; thus, he is fulfilling his duty of helping others in need. What about those who do not love humanity or act in that way? What about those people who are not getting any benefit from discharging their duty? Then, principally, they cannot be held responsible for not fulfilling their duties. Thus, to bring in a universal framework of ethics for all rational beings, Kant has tried to block these individual preferences for fulfilling one's duty. He argues that it is reasonable to do our duties only for the sake of duty and without any other motivation. Reason should be our primary motivational basis to act ethically. Kant finds love, sympathy, and relational acts as contingent, and we cannot consider actions inspired by these feelings as acts of goodwill. The question that remains here is that can human beings be so unaffected/neutral in different situations of their lives to make moral decisions only inspired by reason? How can a person consider his mother and a stranger as having the same value for him when both are drowning, and he is the only person who can save only one of them? Most Kantians would argue that the person can save his mother, but he should not make the decision based on the affiliations he has with his mother. The worth of two human lives should be seen on equal terms. By being rational, each and every human being is end-in-themselves, which comes from Kant's second maxim. But the problem remains the same – how far we, human beings, are competent to disregard our affiliations, relations, emotional attachments, sympathy, a contextual environment which, apart from reason, contributes to a large extent in our moral decision making.

Kant's second maxim has contributed a lot in shaping modern human rights discourse. It demands every individual to treat every other person, whether his/ her own person or not, always as an end and never only as a mere means. This maxim secures the intrinsic worth of a person as the person has personhood. It will not be wrong to state that this 'personhood' in Kantian philosophy has mostly been defined based on a person's rationality. This maxim secures individuals from any exploitation and promotes treating with the will to do welfare for them,

respect their rights, and avoid harming. Treating people always as an end will lead to the “Kingdom of Ends” which is the goal of Kant’s third maxim.

Though this maxim talks about people’s overall welfare in society, some unease is there regarding treating everyone as a mere end. We should not give punishment for the sake of society. Kant has rejected the Utilitarian argument for punishment as that would lead to treating criminals merely as an end for others’ happiness. Kant argues that punishment is a concern of justice, and we should decide punishment, which is fitting for the crimes. So “eye for an eye” might be the suitable theory for the Kantian understanding of punishment. The question arises here is that what if the criminal is a victim of his or her situation? What if someone mistakenly murdered an innocent? Can we judge those situations through any other principle? Or, are we to punish them only based on the crime, they have done irrespective of their situation or context in which somebody had done the crime? These are the questions which lead us to consider that Kantian theory of ethics has not accommodated all the ethical issues.

Check Your Progress III

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
- b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Define Categorical Imperatives.

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2. Discuss in brief the major criticisms against Kantian deontology.

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9.5 CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF VIRTUE ETHICS

Utilitarianism and Kantian deontology revolve around the question - how to act morally or what makes an action good or bad? Virtue ethics advocates ask the question from ancient times, as Rachel puts it, “*what traits of character make someone a good person*” (Rachel 2012, p.157). Instead of finding out action-guiding principles, they delved into finding virtues that make a person good. Plato has identified virtues as something internal to human beings rather than something external of them. Human virtues reside in human beings. Utilitarianism and deontological ethics are trying to find out good and bad in actions in the form of moral obligations and in consequences of the action. Plato argues in *The Republic* that if individual beings are virtuous only, they will act in good ways.

Both Plato and Aristotle have opined that the goodness of a human being cannot be determined by analyzing instances of actions. If it is a virtue, it should be habitual and constant in every action. We cannot consider a serial killer as a good person by observing one single act of goodness done by him. Other ethics theories are not so concerned about making a person good or cultivating virtues in individual beings. They seem to revolve around what considerations we should keep in our mind in making a moral decision, how we ought to act, and how to assess an act on and pass a moral judgment about whether the action is good or bad. Virtue ethics talks about different virtues that should be cultivated in human beings so that acting in good ways should be their habit and not ephemeral. Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) has argued that the concerns of virtue ethics have been disregarded in contemporary times, and those trying to advocate it seem to be misguided. We should again return to the approach that Greek philosophers have developed, especially Aristotle.

Plato has responded to how to be virtuous by saying that there should be harmony/ balance between different parts of the soul (Reason, Courage, and Temperance). Aristotle has tried to define harmony by stating that virtues are the midpoint of two vices – one is extreme, and the other is insufficient. He termed this midpoint as the “Golden Rule.” So, saying that being courageous is a virtue means, in Aristotelean framework, to say that one should not be over-courageous, which will lead to recklessness, and one should not be coward as well. This understanding applies in all the list of virtues concerning human beings. Plato has tried to delve deep into this issue. For him to be virtuous the human soul needs to maintain a harmonious state where Reason, Courage, and Temperance are in concomitance. Plato would place this harmony as a condition to maintain the Aristotelean “Golden Rule”. Plato would say that once the psychic harmony is in place, people would act in ways that are good on a continuous basis.

The major criticism that comes up against this theory is its inability to explain why something should be considered a virtue. Why should we consider truthfulness as a virtue? Why are any of the virtues considered a virtue? In the case of Utilitarianism, they would readily point out why they would consider any action as good or bad. Advocates of Kantian deontology would also rely on their principles to pass a moral value judgment. But in the case of Virtue ethics, that explanation is imprecise. Thus, there is no substantial ground provided by this ethics approach on why we should consider kindness/courageous/ truthfulness as a virtue. In addition to that, many people have argued that the virtues are not in-itself valuable, but they are valuable because either they help us in generating overall welfare in society (Utilitarian concern) or they help us in discharging our duties (Deontological concern). Like, we consider kindness to others is a virtue because by being kind to others, we maximize welfare in society. While many people subscribe to this view, Plato in *The Republic* has firmly argued that justice as a virtue is valuable for its own sake and for the consequences it brings as well.

Another objection to Virtue ethics is that this normative ethics approach has very little to guide when a person faces an ethical dilemma. For example, a person may face a dilemma between either telling the truth, which will hurt another person’s sentiments or being kind and compassionate by being silent. How would the individual choose to prioritize one virtue over the other in cases of conflict of two virtues?

9.6 LET US SUM UP

So far, in this unit we have tried to analyze different ethical approaches critically. At this juncture, we can say that no theory is perfect and beyond criticism. Every theory has its strength and has made its mark on the history of Philosophy. Contemporary developments in the discipline of ethics might not have been possible without these approaches. Criticisms are not being made and should not be made to vilify any theory. Criticisms show the problematic aspects of a theory and attempt to fulfill the lacunae inside concepts. Despite all the criticisms, no one would deny the positive contribution these theories have made in understanding the distinction between good and bad or right and wrong.

Check Your Progress IV

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. How is the concern of Virtue Ethics different from the other approaches of ethics?

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2. Discuss in brief the major criticisms against Virtue Ethics.

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9.7 KEY WORDS

Critical Appraisal : To evaluate any concept/principle critically.
Normative Ethics : Moral philosophy about norm/rule-making in moral life. Some of the pertinent questions of this moral philosophy are; What are the moral principles? What is the basis to establish these moral principles/norms?

9.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Utilitarianism formulates utility as the basis for assessing an action, whether that is good or bad. Advocates of this theory have defined utility in terms of happiness. They provide the principle that if an action produces pleasure/happiness over pain/sorrow among the maximum number of people, then that action would be considered good otherwise, it would be regarded as bad.
2. The major difference between Utilitarianism and Deontology is that Utilitarianism states that we need to analyze the consequences of an action to determine whether the action is good or bad. On the other hand, deontology states that we need to examine the action in-itself in making a moral judgment about the action. Apart from that, Utilitarianism is centred around the question of utility in terms of pleasure and pain. Deontological ethics revolves around the concept of duty irrespective of whether discharging one's duty produces pain or pleasure.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Utilitarianism is consequential because it gives priority to the consequences of an action in making an ethical evaluation of it. Whether an action/policy/ rule is good or bad depends on how much pain or pleasure it produces as consequences. The charge against Utilitarianism is that this principle overlooks the factor that actions might be intrinsically good or bad. Actions might have value themselves. In addition to that, consequences would not always morally justify an action. For example, people might get happiness by harming/torturing an innocent person. But torturing or harming an innocent is in-itself bad.
2. The moral principle that Utilitarianism has provided is good if it produces maximum happiness among the maximum number of people; otherwise, it will be considered bad. Scholars have raised the question that if that is so, there will be no uniformity in making a moral judgment about an action. A particular action in one situation might be good because it might produce happiness over sorrow, but the same action in a different situation might be considered bad because there it has produced suffering over pleasure. So, good and bad is entirely situational and thus relativistic.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. Kant formulates Categorical Imperatives in understanding moral obligations. Categorical imperatives are not dependent upon a person's desire or fulfill

some other ends that are applicable for hypothetical imperatives. The nature of categorical imperatives is 'you ought to do it' irrespective of whether someone desires to do it or not. If moral law prescribes something as a duty, one should do it. Categorical imperatives are unconditional and without exceptions. One should not violate them in any condition.

2. One of the major criticisms against Kantian deontology is that this theory is not unambiguous in dealing with moral dilemmas. This theory is silent largely, or we can say not guiding us on questions like which duty should get priority, telling the truth or saving an innocent's life, if there is a conflict between two moral duties. Another criticism that comes up in a significant way against this theory is that Kant's categorical imperatives prevent us from considering any concerns for the consequences that my fulfillment of duty might bring. Sometimes we need to foresee the relevant implications of action; otherwise, many negative consequences might fall out from one single act of ours.

Answers to Check Your Progress IV

1. Virtue Ethics, primarily, asks a completely different question from Utilitarianism and Deontological ethics. Instead of asking what makes an action good or bad, it asks the character traits that make a person good or bad. So, the primary aim of virtue ethics is different from the other two approaches of ethics. Another important difference is that Virtue ethics does not prioritize single instances of action to make a moral value judgment like the other two theories. It considers virtues as something constant (habitual). We actually cannot judge a person by observing one instance of doing good. He might be a serial offender, and he might have done that act of goodness by chance.
2. The major criticism that comes up against Virtue ethics is in the form of the question that why should consider virtues as a virtue at all. Why we ought to consider kindness or honesty as a virtue? Virtue ethics provides no precise answer to this question.

UNIT 10 INTRODUCTION TO META-ETHICS*

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Definition
- 10.3 Branches of Metaethics
 - 10.3.1 Ethical Cognitivism
 - 10.3.2 Ethical Non-Cognitivism
- 10.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.5 Key Words
- 10.6 Further Readings and References
- 10.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit learner will enable to understand,

the meaning of metaethics,

its comparison with other branches of ethics like normative ethics and applied ethics

different types of metaethical theories and their presuppositions, framework etc.

10.1. INTRODUCTION

Ethics is the philosophical study of moral principles. It is the study of what are good and bad ends to pursue in life, and what is right and wrong to do in our everyday life. Its primary aim is to determine how one ought to live and what one ought to do in life. We can also say that it is a systematic study of the concepts, guiding rules and theories that are involved in our right and wrong behaviour. Ethics is broadly divided into three main branches: normative ethics, applied ethics and metaethics. Normative ethics examines standards for rightness and wrongness of actions. Normative ethics is the study of norms, codes of conduct, rules that make actions right or wrong. This may involve articulating the good habits or virtues that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behaviour on others. Applied ethics attempts to apply the ethical theories in particular situations. It involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, capital punishment, human cloning and so on. While normative ethics and applied ethics focus on what is moral or what one ought to do, metaethics focuses on what morality itself is. Metaethics investigates the ethical principles and where they come from, and

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what they actually mean. Metaethics serves as a foundation for normative and applied ethics.

Let us understand the distinction between applied ethics, normative ethics and metaethics with the help of an analogy of football game. “Here different things associated with football will be equated with different disciplines of ethics. There are the *players*, whom we can think as applied ethicists. Applied ethicists are interested in moral questions regarding particular issues such as whether it is wrong to have an abortion, whether suicide is permissible, whether we have an obligation to donate money, whether human cloning is wrong and so on. Then there is a *referee*, who helps to interpret the rules that players are following. The referee can be thought of as normative ethicist. The normative ethicists are interested in questions regarding underlying principles that guide the applied ethicist. For example, in working out what is right and wrong, should only the consequences matter? What kind of person should we become? Finally, there is the football *analyst* who does not kick a ball or interpret the rules for the players but tries to understand and comment on what is going on in the game itself. This is like the metaethicist, who asks questions about the very practice of ethics. In this way metaethics differs from applied and normative ethics.”

This unit will provide a detailed introduction of what metaethics is and the different types of metaethical theories.

10.2 DEFINITION

“Metaethics is the attempt to understand the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological, presuppositions and commitments of moral thought, talk, and practice.” (*Plato Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, entries on Metaethics). Metaethics is an enquiry into the nature and meaning of our moral judgements and actions. The aim of metaethics is to investigate where ethical principles come from, and what they mean. For example, when we say, Honesty is good, then what we want to say, or in other words, what do we mean when we use the term good in a moral judgement. The word Metaethics is coined by joining two words “meta” and “ethics”. Here, the word “meta” is often misunderstood as being “beyond” or “after” ethics, on the contrary it means to “think about” or “sit apart from” ethics which means to go into the fundamental of the ethics. It takes a bird’s-eye view on the ethical practices as metaethicists go deep into the fundamental questions of morality and try to make sense of what is going on. Thus, one should not think of metaethics as something beyond or distant from ethics instead it is more fundamental and goes even deeper to the basic question of what morality itself is.

Though the word “metaethics” was coined in the twentieth century, the basic philosophical concern regarding the status and foundations of moral language, properties and judgements goes back to the ancient Greek philosophy in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. In Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Socrates’ defence of the separation of divine commands from moral values is considered a forerunner of modern metaethical debates regarding the secular foundation of moral values. Even in Aristotle’s Book one of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, grounding of virtue and happiness in the biological and political nature of human, has also been examined from the perspective of contemporary metaethics. Many Medieval accounts of morality that ground values in religious texts, commands, or emulation

may also be understood as defending certain metaethical positions. In contrast, Immanuel Kant proposed the foundation for ethics that was not based on the religious sectarian differences. Kant's discussions in his *Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals* of a universal "moral law" necessitated by reason have been fertile ground for the articulation of many contemporary neo-Kantian defences of moral objectivity. Metaethics as a branch of ethics became prominent in the twentieth century with the writings of G. E. Moore.

Metaethics deals with following questions: Are there moral facts? If there are moral facts, what is their origin? And how do we learn about the moral facts, if there are any? What do exactly people mean when they use the words like "good" and "right"? Where do moral values come from—what is their source and foundation? Are some things morally right or wrong for all people at all times, or does morality instead vary from person to person, context to context, or culture to culture? These are some of the basic questions which are acknowledged in metaethics, which sets a foundation for normative and applied ethics. The central question is the question of whether any moral claims are true, and whether it is rational to commit oneself to acting morally. This question can only be answered by taking a position on the correctness or cogency of people's moral convictions. Metaethics, in dealing with the question of whether ethical sentences express propositions, is divided broadly into two branches which are Ethical Cognitivism and Ethical Non-Cognitivism, which are further divided into many branches.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

c) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

5. Differentiate between metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics.

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10.3 BRANCHES OF METAETHICS

Metaethical theories can be broadly categorised into two branches: ethical cognitivism and ethical non-cognitivism. In ethical cognitivism, ethical sentences can express beliefs which are truth bearers and therefore they can be regarded as true or false. Whereas in ethical non-cognitivism, in contrast to ethical cognitivism, ethical sentences do not express beliefs.

10.3.1 Ethical Cognitivism

Ethical Cognitivism is a metaethical theory according to which (1) moral judgements can express beliefs and (2) they are *truth-apt*, which means the

statements can be described as true or false. Psychological Cognitivism advocates that a moral statement is an utterance of our belief about a moral action. When someone makes claims like “killing someone is wrong” or “Abortion is morally wrong”, then he is expressing a belief. These statements, “killing someone is wrong” and “Abortion is morally wrong”, can be true or false which is called *truth-apt*. The view that moral statements can be true or false is known as Semantic Cognitivism. According to the Semantic Cognitivists, our moral statements are made true or false based on how accurately they refer to the specific moral aspect of the world. What is it that makes them true or false? Semantic cognitivists view moral language as essentially descriptive in nature. Just like the statement “cat is on the mat” makes a descriptive claim that the cat is sitting on the mat and it is true or false based on whether the cat is actually sitting on the mat or not. This statement expresses a belief about how the world actually is. In the similar way moral statements also make descriptive claims and their truth and falsity is based on the external world or state of affairs. Our moral claims will be true when our descriptions about moral claims correspond (represent; as it is) with the external world or facts or state of affairs, if they do not correspond with the external world, facts or state of affairs, then they will be false. Ethical Cognitivists take the views of psychological cognitivism and semantic cognitivism together, when they claim that moral statements are the expression of truth-apt beliefs and their truth value (truth and falsity) can be determined only on the basis of their correspondence with the facts or external world. Ethical cognitivism includes moral realism, moral subjectivism and error theory.

10.3.1.1 Moral Realism

Moral realism holds that the moral statements express a belief and these beliefs are regarded as mind-independent facts of the world. We find two basic premises of moral realism, one is that moral facts exist and second is that the moral facts exist independently of human mind. When we say that moral facts are objective and independent it means that they do not depend on beliefs and attitudes of an individual or on norms of any culture. In believing that “killing someone is wrong” does not make killing wrong, what world makes killing wrong is the presence of actual moral property of wrong (objective and mind-independent) associated with the act of killing. Moral realism is divided into two varieties: ethical naturalism and ethical non-naturalism.

2 Ethical Naturalism

Ethical naturalism holds that there are objective and natural moral properties. They hold that we have empirical knowledge of the moral truths. Naturalism may be defined widely so as to include all reductionist ethical theories which explain the function of ethical terms in terms of natural phenomena, i.e. so as to include hedonists and utilitarian theories, account of ‘good’, ‘ought’ and ‘right’ in terms of satisfaction of desires, as well as propositional and non-cognitivist version of subjectivism and relativism. Advocates of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill define moral goodness in terms of actions that promote greatest amount of (qualitative happiness, especially in Mill’s version of Utilitarianism) happiness for the greater number of people. That is why we can say that these philosophers see ‘good’ as a natural property (i.e., We can measure happiness).

4. Ethical Non-Naturalism

In ethical non-naturalism moral properties are entirely different from the natural properties. G.E. Moore is the main contender of non-naturalism. According to Moore moral properties do not exist in the outside world like natural properties and they are fundamentally simple non-natural properties. Here goodness is not a natural property which can be known through the empirical means. Non-naturalists believe that we can know the presence of moral properties (for example goodness) *intuitively* with the help of moral sense present in us. G. E. Moore objects the view that moral properties are natural properties. Moore believes that moral properties are fundamentally simple. He criticizes the view of identifying moral properties with natural properties which he named as the *naturalistic fallacy*. Moore refutes equating of moral properties like ‘goodness’ with the non-moral properties, whether naturalistic or supernatural.

10.3.1.2 Moral Subjectivism

Moral Subjectivism holds that there are no objective moral properties and it is, therefore, a form of moral anti-realism. According to moral subjectivism moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes or conventions of the people. Here moral statements imply attitudes, opinions or feelings of the people. So when one says “euthanasia is wrong and should be impermissible”, even though it seems that this statement could be true or false, it is just an expression of dislike or disagreement with euthanasia. It is similar to saying “I don’t like euthanasia”. In ethical subjectivism there is individual subjectivism and cultural relativism. Individual subjectivism means subjectivism or experience of an individual. While, in cultural relativism, there are many cultures and these many cultures have different values or morals, due to which it is called relative. Ethical subjectivism includes ideal observer theory and divine command theory

5. Ideal Observer Theory

The ideal observer theory offers an account of the truth and falsity of moral judgments in terms of the approval or disapproval of an ideal observer. An ideal observer is “a person who makes moral judgments without being influenced by the sort of contaminating biases or prejudices that tend to arise from the occupation of some particular point of view”. (Plato Stanford Encyclopedia, entry on Impartiality.) Ideal observer is perfectly rational, impartial, imaginative. The ideal observer observes everything and has an ideal concept about everything. Richard B. Brandt believes that the qualifications to know every ethically relevant fact are not relevant in order to be an ideal observer. He says, “...we can cut the qualification still more. The ideal observer need not really know these [ethically relevant] facts; he merely has to believe them, correctly, and with perfect vividness, to be facts-which of course is to be distinguished from knowing them.” (Richard B. Brandt, “The Definition of an “Ideal Observer” Theory in Ethics”, 1955) There should be no partiality, it should be neutral and the concepts must be cleared. Adam Smith and David Hume are recognised to have espoused the early versions of the ideal observer theory and Roderick Firth is responsible for the modern version of ideal observer theory.

3. Divine Command Theory

Divine command theory holds that morality is dependent upon God. According to this theory moral facts are determined by the commandments of God. Thus, a morally right action is the one which God commands. For divine command theorists, God exists outside time and space. The content of these divine commands varies based on the particular religion. While they all commonly hold the claim that morality and moral obligations ultimately depend on God. This theory has been defended by Thomas Aquinas, Robert Adams, and Philip Quinn.

10.3.1.3 Error Theory

Error theory holds a view that ethical statements can be propositions, but that all ethical propositions are false. It means that we are generally in error when we make any moral statement. The prominent proponent of error theory was J. L. Mackie. He advocates that our moral utterances are expressions of those beliefs that have truth-value (Truth-apt belief; belief that can be classified either as true or as false). But he rejects realist position that states that these utterances always correspond with the external world. There is always a possibility of committing mistake or having error in our moral judgement or statement. Without having moral properties, the description of the world in terms of truth-apt beliefs is not possible, so he rejects that these beliefs can be true if these are not linked with any moral properties. Error theory includes moral nihilism and moral scepticism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

Define Ethical Cognitivism.

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What are the theories that are included in Ethical Cognitivism? Define briefly.

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10.3.2 Ethical Non-Cognitivism

Ethical non-cognitivism is a metaethical view according to which ethical sentences do not express a belief or proposition and thus, cannot be regarded as true or false. According to non-cognitivists, when people utter moral statements they are not expressing a state of mind, say a belief, or cognition. Rather, they are expressing non-cognitive attitudes like desire, attitude or emotion. For example, “killing is wrong” is an expression of disapproval. Non-cognitivists claim that moral claims (approval and disapproval of moral actions) cannot be regarded as true or false.

Psychological Non-Cognitivists state that our moral sentences are not based on beliefs, but they are rather based on feelings, desires, emotions, preferences or attitudes. According to Semantic Non-Cognitivists, when we say “killing is wrong” we do not describe any moral characteristic of the world. We are just expressing our feeling or attitude towards the act of killing. Attitudes and feelings are not truth-apt, as they do not refer to anything in the world, therefore, they cannot be true or false.

Ethical non-cognitivism consists of non-declarative speech act, which means that moral claims can exist without their truth or falsity values. The example of ethical non-cognitive statement (non-declarative speech act) is the utterance like “Don’t kill”. This utterance “Don’t kill” has no truth value; it cannot be true or false.

The theories which are included in ethical non-cognitivism are: emotivism, quasi realism and universal prescriptivism.

10.3.2.1 Emotivism

Emotivism is a view that ethical sentences express only emotional expressions of one’s own attitudes. A. J. Ayer and C. L. Stevenson were the defenders of emotivism.

According to Emotivism moral statement that “murder is wrong” is simply an expression of emotion against the act of murdering. It gives formal linguistic voice to what is essentially a negative “boo” to murder. Indeed, Emotivism is referred to as the “boo/ hurrah” metaethical theory; when we claim that something is morally wrong we boo that action and when we claim that something is morally right we hurrah that action. (Mark Dimmock and Andrew Fisher, *Ethics for A-Level*)

A. J. Ayer claims that moral statements have no factual meanings. Moral utterances or statements are not proposition. That is why moral utterances cannot be classified as true or false. He states in “The Emotive Theory of Ethics”,

The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, ‘You acted wrongly in stealing that money,’ I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, ‘You stole that money.’ In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, ‘You stole that money,’ in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker. If now I generalise my previous statement and say, ‘Stealing money is wrong,’ I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning – that is, expresses no proposition which can be true or false. It is as if I had written ‘Stealing money!!’ – where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed. It is clear that there is nothing said here which can be true or false. (“The Emotive Theory of Ethics”, p. 124)

This is how Ayer argued that ethical statements are always related to individuals and they lack truth value. C. L. Stevenson, following Ayer, says that ethical sentences express the speaker’s feelings.

10.3.2.2 Quasi Realism

Quasi realism is a metaethical view with the claim that ethical utterances are the projection of emotional attitudes or emotions as if emotions are real properties. They do not express propositions. This view is defended by Simon Blackburn. Simon holds that it may be possible that there is no ethical fact in the world that correspond to ethical statements, but linguistically ethical statements behave as if they are factual claims and that is why they can be appropriately regarded as true or false.

10.3.2.3 Universal Prescriptivism

Universal Prescriptivism is a metaethical view which holds that ethical sentences work as imperatives and these imperatives are universalised. R. M. Hare is a defender of this theory. He states that moral utterances express more than just emotional approval and disapproval. Moral utterances express subjective prescription. They are prescriptive in nature. When someone utters a moral judgement or statement, he or she wants the other to act in accordance with his or her moral judgement. For example, B claims that “Suicide is morally wrong”, it means that B wants others to stop supporting or deciding in favour of suicide. Prescriptivism is an attempt to capture the action-guiding nature of moral judgements or utterances. Moral utterances like “Telling truth is right”, means something like “Speak truth.” Hare says that moral judgements are universalizable, it means they have objective value.

Check Your Progress III

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
- c) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

4. Define Ethical Non-Cognitivism.

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5. Distinguish between Ethical Cognitivism and Ethical Non-cognitivism.

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10.4 LET US SUM UP

It has been shown in the previous sections how metaethics creates a foundation for normative and applied ethics. Metaethics, a branch of ethics, is an enquiry into the nature and meaning of ethical terms and moral foundations. It is broadly divided into two branches: ethical cognitivism and ethical non-cognitivism. They are further divided into different theories. All the theories (including both ethical cognitivism and ethical non-cognitivism) set a foundation for ethics. They try to define basic ethical concepts like “good”, “right” etc. They also try to show how we learn about the moral facts. The different metaethical theories have provided different views on the question whether moral statements are considered truth-apt. The theories in normative and applied ethics fall under these metaethical theories.

10.5 KEY WORDS

Fundamental: Fundamental here means forming a base or a principle on which something is based. So metaethics is a base on which normative and applied ethics are based.

Truth-apt: It means that the statements carry a truth value and can be described as true or false.

Objective (mind-independent) facts: To be an objective, mind-independent fact means that facts are not dependent for their existence on the mind, rather, they are present in the outside world. They can be objectively or empirically known.

10.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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Online Resources:

Plato Stanford encyclopedia of Philosophy, entry on "Metaethics".

Plato Stanford encyclopedia of Philosophy, entry on "Impartiality".

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 2 Ethics is broadly divided into three main branches: normative ethics, applied ethics and metaethics. Normative ethics examines standards for rightness and wrongness of actions. It is the study of what makes an action right or wrong. On the other hand, applied ethics attempts to apply the ethical theories in particular situations. It involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, capital punishment, human cloning and so on. While normative ethics and applied ethics focus on what is moral or what one ought to do, metaethics focuses on what morality itself is. Metaethics serves as a foundation for normative and applied ethics.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

4. Ethical Cognitivism is a metaethical theory according to which (1) moral judgements can express beliefs and (2) they are truth-apt, which means the statements can be described as true or false.
5. Ethical cognitivism includes moral realism, moral subjectivism and error theory. According to moral realism, moral statements express a belief and these beliefs are regarded as mind-independent facts of the world. It is of two types: ethical naturalism and ethical non-naturalism. Whereas, in moral subjectivism, moral statements are made true or false by the attitudes or conventions of the people. Here ethical sentences imply an attitude, opinions or feelings of the people. Moral subjectivism includes two theories: Ideal Observer theory and Divine Command theory. Lastly, Error theory holds a view that ethical statements can be propositions, but that all ethical propositions are false.

4. Ethical non-cognitivism is a metaethical view according to which ethical sentences do not express a belief or proposition and thus, cannot be regarded as true or false. According to non-cognitivists, when people utter moral statements they are not expressing a state of mind, say a belief. Rather, they are expressing non-cognitive attitudes like desire or emotion.
5. According to Ethical cognitivism, moral judgements express truth-apt beliefs. Whereas, ethical non-cognitivism holds that moral judgements do not express belief or proposition and thus, a truth-value cannot be assigned to them.

UNIT 11 ETHICAL NATURALISM AND NON-NATURALISM*

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Ethical Naturalism
- 11.3 Ethical Non-Naturalism
 - 11.3.1 G.E. Moore on Naturalistic Fallacy
 - 11.3.2 Open Question Argument
 - 11.3.3 Intuitionism
- 11.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.5 Key Words
- 11.6 Further Readings and References
- 11.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is,

to explicate the meaning of ethical naturalism and non-naturalism as metaethical theories and also

to locate an important distinction between them.

to show how ethical naturalism and non-naturalism deals with metaethical questions like: Are there moral facts? If there are moral facts, what is their origin? And how do we learn about the moral facts, if there are any? What exactly do people mean when they use the words like “good” and “right”?

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Moral thinking is a vital aspect of our lives. In our everyday life we face questions like; whether the action is right or wrong, good or bad, whether a character trait is a virtue or vice and what is it that makes an action good or bad, right or wrong. These metaethical puzzles are addressed differently in different metaethical theories. Metaethical theories are broadly categorised into two branches; ethical or moral cognitivism and ethical or moral non-cognitivism. Ethical cognitivism states that ethical sentences can express beliefs which are truth bearers and therefore they can be regarded as true or false, whereas, ethical non-cognitivism states that ethical sentences do not express beliefs.

Ethical Cognitivism claims that ethical language expresses beliefs about how the world is. To believe that violence is wrong is to believe that the sentence or

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utterance ‘Violence is wrong’ is true. Thus, ethical language aims to describe the world, and so it can be true or false. According to the cognitivists, moral statements or sentences make descriptive claims and their truth-value is based on the external world. Our moral claims or judgements are true when our descriptions (descriptions presented in moral claims or judgements) corresponds (‘as it is’ presentation of something) the external world (facts presented in the external world) and false when they do not correspond the external world. Ethical cognitivism includes the theories like moral realism, moral subjectivism and error theory.

Moral realism holds that the moral statements express a belief and these beliefs are regarded as mind-independent facts of the world. Moral realism holds that moral properties are real and objective properties that are proper objects of moral evaluation. Moral properties are genuine part of the external world. Moral realism is an attempt show the nature of the relation between moral properties and natural properties. Natural properties are those properties that we can identify through sense experience and scientific enquiry. This has led to two positions: ethical naturalism and ethical non-naturalism.

Ethical naturalism and non-naturalism are the forms of moral realism. Ethical naturalism holds that there are objective and natural moral properties and we can know them empirically. While ethical non-naturalism holds that moral properties are entirely different from the natural properties.

The following sections will discuss ethical naturalism and non-naturalism in detail.

11.2 ETHICAL NATURALISM

Ethical naturalists hold that there are natural moral properties and relations. According to them moral properties like goodness, justice, rightness, etc. are natural. Thus, in ethical naturalism ethical sentences express propositions which are made true by the real and objective features of the world. Ethical naturalism holds that moral values and moral obligations fit into the scientifically based, naturalistic view of the world. “It holds, more specifically, (a) that such ethical properties as the goodness of persons, character traits, and other things, and such as the rightness or wrongness of actions, are natural properties of the same general sort as properties investigated by the sciences, and (b) that they are to be investigated in the same general way that we investigate those properties.” Moral values, being objective, can be known in the same way as we know the scientific facts. Ethical naturalists believe that moral claims are ultimately about features of the natural world, which is the subject matter of scientific study and therefore, they tend to embrace moral realism which is the view that moral claims are not merely expressive statements but are literally true or false.

Ethical naturalism can be understood by joining the following claims: There are objective, mind-independent moral facts, Moral facts are natural facts; we know moral claims are true in the same way that we know about claims in the natural sciences, and our moral claims are synonymous with certain claims in natural sciences.

John Stuart Mill’s version of utilitarianism is often seen as an example of ethical naturalism, which states that an action is morally right to the extent that it tends

to produce maximum happiness and morally wrong to the extent that it fails to produce happiness or tends to produce unhappiness.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

2 Define ethical naturalism.

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11.3 ETHICAL NON-NATURALISM

Ethical non-naturalism claims that moral properties and facts are not natural properties and facts. It holds that ethical sentences express propositions which are truth apt and they are made true or false by the real and objective features of the world. According to ethical non-naturalism, moral features of the world cannot be reduced to any set of non-moral features, whereas in ethical naturalism moral features are seen to be reducible to non-moral features or to natural features.

G. E. Moore is the main contender of non-naturalism. In his book *Principia Ethica*, G. E. Moore states that moral properties cannot be seen as natural properties. In common parlance (in our day to day affairs), we correlate moral properties (e.g., good) with non-moral (e.g. natural) properties. But that does not mean that moral properties and non-moral properties are identical in nature. Generally we say that ‘x is good,’ means ‘x gives pleasure.’ Or ‘x is pleasurable’. In this way we equate good and pleasurable. Moore says that good (or any moral properties) cannot be equated with any other properties or translated into any other properties. When we define moral property in the terms natural property or natural properties, we commit ‘naturalistic fallacy.’ When we try to define a moral property but it could not be defined. So the question remains to be asked here ‘What is good (or any moral property)?’ Moore refers this situation as ‘open question argument.’

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Define Ethical Non-Naturalism.

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11.3.1 G. E. Moore on Naturalistic Fallacy

G.E. Moore argues that any attempt to define ‘good’ (or any other moral property), whether in naturalistic or in non-naturalistic terms, is fallacious. Moore says that any attempt to define ‘good’ in terms of natural properties is fallacious and he named it as naturalistic fallacy. Good or goodness is a basic property and cannot be analysed. Goodness has no parts. That is why we cannot define goodness in terms parts. Moore states that ‘good is good’, and it cannot be defined. There are moral facts, like, if X is good then it is a moral fact that it is. Moore says,

It may be true that all things which are good are also something else, just as it is true that all things which are yellow produce a certain kind of vibration in the light. And it is a fact, that Ethics aims at discovering what are those other properties belonging to all things which are good. But far too many philosophers have thought that when they named those other properties they were actually defining good; that these properties, in fact, were simply not “other,” but absolutely and entirely the same with goodness. This view I propose to call the “naturalistic fallacy” and of it I shall now endeavour to dispose. (Moore, *Principia Ethica*, section 10.3)

For Moore, Goodness is a simple, indefinable, non-natural property. For instance, Yellow is a simple, natural property. You cannot explain what yellow is to someone who doesn’t know what yellow is. Yellow is part of our visual experience of the world. In the words of Moore,

We may try to define it [yellow], by describing its physical equivalent; we may state what kind of light-vibrations must stimulate the normal eye, in order that we may perceive it. But a moment’s reflection is sufficient to show that those light-vibrations are not themselves what we mean by yellow. They are not what we perceive. Indeed, we should never have been able to discover their existence, unless we had first been struck by the patent difference of quality between the different colours. The most we can be entitled to say of those vibrations is that they are what corresponds in space to the yellow which we actually perceive. (Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Section 10.2)

Similarly, we cannot define ‘good’ or ‘goodness’; it can only be shown (in the act of goodness).

11.3.2 Open Question Argument

Moore used the open question argument to defend a non-naturalist account of goodness. His argument for the indefinability of ‘good’ is often called the open-question argument. To argue that a definition of goodness is impossible, he offered the ‘*open question*’ argument. The open question argument maintains that whether goodness is co-instantiated with any natural property or set of natural properties is always a conceptually open question. Suppose someone defines good as happiness. It might be the case that happiness is indeed a good thing. Still, Moore insists that it is a genuine question, the answer to which we must find out, whether good is just the same thing as happiness. If it were a matter of definition – if “good” just meant “happiness” because they are definitionally equivalent, there would be no open question. The matter would be settled by what the words mean. Moore’s concern was that if intrinsic value (good) were analysable into any non-moral terms, then good would be wholly assimilated to something non-moral. But good is, what it is, and not any other thing.

Suppose we define good as A. We can fill different contents in A, according to what we take good to be. If “A” is “pleasant and desirable” and we ask “Is what is pleasant and desirable, pleasant and desirable?” we are not asking an open

question. If we ask “Is what is pleasant and desirable also good?” here we are asking an open question. Again, it may be the case that things that are A, are good things, but that does not show that good and A are identical or that “good” and “A” have exactly the same meaning. If goodness is identical with pleasure, then it has no sense to ask ‘Is pleasure good?’ It is something like asking ‘Is pleasure pleasure?’ This is not a real question (the answer of this question has to be ‘yes’), but ‘Is pleasure good?’ is a real question. We can answer it as yes or no. That is why goodness or good is not identical with any other property.

Now, someone can ask, is there anything which has the property of goodness? We can say that pleasure is good in this sense. But here it is clear that these are two distinct things (happiness and goodness). For example, you are not identical with your height or weight.

Thus Moore argues that moral values are not identical to natural properties. He holds that moral values depend upon the presence of non-moral properties. Something is good in virtue of its good-making properties. Given that a thing has those particular types of properties, it is necessary that it is a good thing. But good is not reducible to non-moral (or even any other moral properties) properties. It is morally good that a person has certain characteristics, honesty, conscientiousness, beneficence, and fairness. But good is not simply equivalent to those in a way that can be shown by a definition of good. When we try to define ‘good’ in the terms of, say, ‘x’, the question that remains is that, ‘Is x really good?’ Moore calls it ‘open question argument.’

11.3.3 Intuitionism

Intuitionism is a form of ethical non-naturalism. It addresses the following question, if moral properties are not natural properties, then how do we understand them or know about them? How do we know what is good or what is bad? It holds that we come to know about moral properties through intuition of those properties. But what is this intuition and how we know that our intuition is true? Are we supposed to have some special faculty of moral intuition? Moore leaves these questions open: “when I call such propositions Intuitions, I mean merely to assert that they are incapable of proof; I imply nothing whatever as to the manner or origin of our cognition of them.” (*Principia Ethica*, preface, Chapter one). He argues that these claims are not true in the sense of analytic truth and they cannot be known empirically. So they must be ‘synthetic a priori’ (Synthetic; new knowledge, a priori means prior to our knowledge). Moore equates intuitions with ‘self-evident’ propositions, because the claim of good of being true and false can be explained by taking into account the claim itself.

One can grasp these self-evident claims directly as these depend on the substantiation of their own plausibility. We develop these claims gradually so it cannot be said that everyone can see it right away as true. What is required here is to have a clear and careful understanding of the issue. These moral intuitions are self-evident means that they cannot be known through the faculty of senses. We have self-evident necessary truths like the truths of mathematics; moral intuitions, like necessary truths, are self-evident. So there is no need to make claims to define intuitions as a searching tool that tells us what is good and what is bad. It is not like a supernatural sense, it only describes some of moral judgements as self-evident and synthetic.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

a Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

3) What is a Naturalistic Fallacy?

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4) Give G.E. Moore’s account on ‘goodness’?

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11.4 LET US SUM UP

Ethical naturalism and non-naturalism are the forms of moral realism in ethical cognitivism. Ethical naturalism states that moral properties like goodness, justice, rightness, etc. are natural. According to ethical naturalists, moral properties are identical to natural properties. In contrast, ethical non-naturalists state that moral properties are not identical to natural properties.

11.5 KEY WORDS

Fallacy: Error or misconception. In this unit, it has been used to show that the argument is creating a fallacy by having a misconception of identifying moral properties with natural properties.

Objective: That which is present in the world outside and can be known empirically. It is a subject matter of science, as science studies the natural facts present in the world.

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11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 2 Ethical Naturalism is a form of moral realism. It holds that there are natural moral properties and relations. In ethical naturalism ethical sentences express propositions which are made true by the objective features of the world, independent of human opinion.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

4. Ethical non-naturalism claims that moral properties and facts are not natural properties and facts. It holds that ethical sentences express propositions which are truth apt and their truth-value is determined by the objective features of the external world. The moral features of the external world cannot be reduced into any non-moral features of the external world.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

- 2 Naturalistic fallacy is proposed by G.E. Moore against ethical naturalism. Moore called the attempt to define goodness in terms of any natural property as naturalistic fallacy.
- 3 G. E. Moore argued that goodness is a simple, indefinable, non-natural property. He compared it to yellow colour. Yellow is a simple property, and we cannot explain what yellow is to someone who doesn't know what yellow is. Similarly, 'goodness' cannot be defined in terms of other (natural) properties. It can only be shown.

UNIT 12 SUBJECTIVISM: DAVID HUME*

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Definition
- 12.3 Different types of Ethical subjectivism
- 12.4 David Hume on Ethical Subjectivism
- 12.5 Lets Us Sum Up
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Further Readings and References
- 12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is,

To understand the meaning and presuppositions of subjectivism in the context of ethics

To explicate the different versions of subjectivism.

To understand David Hume's version of subjectivism.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Subjectivism is the doctrine, which asserts that knowledge is merely subjective and that there is no external or objective truth corresponding to it. For this doctrine, our mental states or activity is the only unquestionable fact of life. There are two kinds of subjectivism- Metaphysical subjectivism and Ethical Subjectivism. Metaphysical Subjectivism holds that reality is what a subject perceives to be real, and that there is no underlying reality beyond the perceptual knowledge of any subject. According to Ethical subjectivism, we can reduce moral statements to factual statements, those statements may be "about the attitudes of individuals and conventions of a culture or society or group of peoples". This unit will cover a detailed discussion of Ethical subjectivism. When people often wonder about ethical standards, they are mostly concerned about the origin i.e., where do they come from or how are they applicable to people? Are ethical standards come from the world, independent of the individual or they come from the individual himself? Are ethical values objective or subjective? While studying meta-ethics, one might often get confused about the academic divisions that are drawn for any purpose of study. Simply, while studying meta-ethics one must keep in mind that Meta-ethics is not concerned about the origin but about the status of ethical claims. While answering these questions, meta-ethics splits into moral realism (sometimes called as moral objectivism or absolutism or universalism) and moral

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anti-realism (sometimes called as moral non-objectivism or moral relativism). Moral Anti-realism is one kind of meta-ethical theory, which believes that there are no moral facts independent of human minds. Morality is not objective. Ethical judgments or any kind of evaluative judgments are clearly mental states. Ethical standards are dependent on the tastes, feelings, and attitudes of the individual. Moral anti-realism holds that moral properties are mind dependant. This could involve- (1) The denial that moral properties at all exists (2) The acceptance that they do exist but that existence is mind-dependent. The below diagram shall show several versions of moral anti-realism:

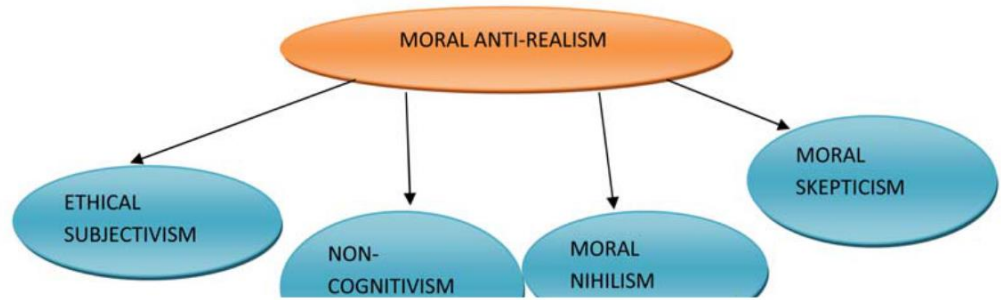


Fig. 1. This figure shows the different versions of Moral anti-realism.

Ethical subjectivism is one of the several versions of moral anti-realism that argues that ethical statements are believed to be subjective. Ethical or moral subjectivism allows that moral facts exists but holds that they are in some manner specified and constituted by mental activity. There is nothing good or bad out there in the world, but properties of good and bad are product of our thinking. Broadly, ethical subjectivism is a form of moral relativism. Moral relativism holds that moral beliefs are relative to whatever standards a particular society or individual happens to have accepted. Moral relativism does not believe in any objective moral basis for the value or that it is valued for all times. It rejects the notion that there is one universal valid morality that can be discovered by valid moral reasoning. Moral relativism claims that there are no universally (and objectively) valid standards based on which we can judge any moral action. The validity of moral standards is dependent on- (1) Cultural acceptance (Conventionalism) - According to moral conventionalism, the validity of moral standards depends on the acceptance within a particular cultural group. (2) Personal choice or commitment (Subjectivism) - According to moral subjectivism, the validity of moral standards depends on the acceptance by the individual in action. One should not think that moral subjectivism and moral relativism are same. Both are different in method. For moral subjectivists, an action is morally right or wrong depends on the approval or disapproval of that action by the individual subject. For moral relativists, an action is morally right or wrong depends either on the individual’s approval or the culture’s approval.

12.2 DEFINITION

Ethical subjectivism is a meta-ethical theory which holds that moral standards or truths are dependent upon the opinions and feelings of the utterer making the subjective moral judgments. This theory stands in opposition to Ethical objectivism. Ethical objectivism holds that truth or falsity of moral judgments does not depend upon the beliefs or feelings of any person or groups of person.

For example, Telling lie is morally wrong. Certain acts are objectively right or wrong independent of human opinion. Ethical subjectivism is the view that value consists in or depends importantly on an individual's contingent psychological state. It argues that moral evaluation is dependent upon subjective moral judgment not upon inter-subjective or objective moral judgments. There are no moral facts for any ethical subjectivist, but are attitudes of people towards the actions. One could ask, when can we say a moral judgment is subjective? A moral judgment is subjective if its truth depends on whether or not it conforms to the attitudes, beliefs, and preferences of the utterer. For example, A person named x has a child. While he was at the departmental store, the child picks up a bottle of cold drink and spills it all over the floor. X bends him over his knees and gives him a good swat on his behind. A woman who saw this, interrupts the spanking by yelling at X, hitting your child is horrible. X's response is, "you have no right to tell me what is right or wrong." By this he means that only X can determine what is right or wrong. Ethical subjectivism asserts that all our moral judgments are relative to whatever choice of moral standards I happen to make. What is morally right for me depends on the standards to which I subscribe. For instance, I might consider abortion is morally permissible depending on the culture I belong. Moreover, you might consider abortion as morally impermissible depending upon your standards. Ethical subjectivism holds that there are no objective (and universal) moral properties. For ethical subjectivist, ethical statements are arbitrary because they do not express unchangeable truths. The truth value of moral statements can be determined only by the attitudes or conventions of the observer. Thus, for a statement to be considered morally right, merely means that the person of interest meets it with approval. It essentially holds that verification and validation in ethics come from the subject itself. Ethical subjectivists are those who maintain that there are no objective moral standards. The subject that holds the viewpoint is the one who determinates that moral standards are not like some other objective criteria like community appeal, or god or anyone outside of subject's views. They do not judge a person's values but the individual's viewpoint will be the basis of their own ethical perspectives. There are no values better than other values because everyone has their right on their opinions or viewpoint. This means that there can be no imposition of values over another. Jean Jacque Rousseau advocated ethical subjectivism. He believes that people are basically good and do the right thing, if not corrupted by the society. He subscribes to what he calls the "law of the heart." The law of the heart maintains that our feelings alone inform us of what is right and wrong and not the abstract principles of society.

An ethical subjectivist would argue that the statement "B was evil" expresses a strong dislike for the sorts of things B did but this does not follow that it is true that B in fact was evil. Another person who disagrees with the statement on purely moral grounds is not making an intellectual error but has a different attitude. There are no objective moral facts. Moral statements are factual statements about the attitude of the speaker on the particular issue. For example, if someone says that 'Non-violence is good', it means that he or she is expressing his or her attitude on this issue. Ethical subjectivism holds that moral statements can be characterized as propositions. Moral statements describe the attitudes of an individual and they do not describe the social or cultural norms or objective or universal truth. All morality is an opinion and beliefs need not be backed by reasons or facts. It believes that our moral opinions are based on feelings and

nothing more. There is nothing right or wrong objectively. It is a fact that some people are homosexual and some are heterosexual, but it is not the fact that one is good and the other is bad. Someone is morally right or wrong based on how one feels. It endorses the idea that there is no thing or action as right or wrong but everything is just an expression of our feelings. Therefore, we cannot judge another’s opinion as being right or wrong since it is merely an opinion of the agent. For instance, using the womb for financial purpose is morally acceptable in my opinion and using the womb for financial purpose is morally unacceptable in my opinion. Both these moral statements boils down to two different opinions considering the context in which it is made, since they are only opinions so neither contest the other.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

- 3. What is moral anti-realism? What are the different types of moral anti-realism?

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12.3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF ETHICAL SUBJECTIVISM

There are four variants of Ethical subjectivism. They are:

1. Simple Subjectivism- Simple subjectivism is a view that ethical statements express sentiments, preferences and feelings of an individual rather than objective or universal fact. Simple subjectivism argues that when individuals make moral statements they are just reflecting their subjective feelings pertaining to the aroused issue. Furthermore, simple subjectivists would contend that what we say regarding morality is just a descriptive expression of our emotions with regard to their issue. According to this viewpoint, there are no facts regarding morality, hence morality is not objective, it lies in the eyes of the beholder. For instance, simple subjectivists would argue that when Alex says that having an extra marital affair is immoral, he is just stating his attitude. He is merely saying that he rejects the idea of extra marital affair. In opposition to that John believes that extra-marital is not moral is just stating his attitude. A Simple subjectivist would not see different viewpoints as disagreeing with one another; rather both parties agree to disagree. Both parties are right with regard to how one feels, thus both statements are true. Simple subjectivism endorses that human beings are infallible because it denies that moral disagreement at all exists.

2. Individualist Subjectivism- Protagoras can be seen as the first proponent of individualist subjectivism. Protagoras says that man is the measure of all things. It is effectively a form of Egoism, which maintains that human being ought to pursue what is in his/her self-interest exclusively. Moral statements are descriptions of speaker's attitudes. When I say abortion is wrong I mean nothing more than what I disapprove abortion. Like, X is right/good/ permissible= I approve of X and X is wrong/bad/forbidden= I disapprove of X.

The individualist subjectivism is always confused with emotivism. Emotivism is the doctrine that states that moral statements merely express one's attitude. According to individual or orthodox subjectivists, while making moral judgment, there is an expression as well as assertion of our emotions. Emotivists, on the other hand, believe that while making moral judgment we only express our emotions. For emotivists, that is why we cannot assign any truth value to the statement. But individualist subjectivism describes moral statements through one's express beliefs and attitudes.

3) **Ideal Observer Theory-** Ideal observer theory holds that ethical sentences express proposition about the attitudes of a hypothetical ideal observer. In other words, an ideal observer theory states that ethical judgments should be interpreted as statements about what the neutral, rational and (perhaps) fully informed observer would make. This means that X is good because the ideal observer approves X. The main idea of the ideal observer theory is that ethical sentences should be defined after the pattern of the following example- "X is better than Y" means if anyone were in respect of X and Y, fully informed and vividly imaginative, impartial in a calm frame of mind would prefer X to

The ideal observer theory offers an account of truth of moral judgments in terms of approval or disapproval of an ideal observer. Roderick Firth was first to answer the question, what does it mean by X is right or X is good? Adam Smith and David Hume were the predecessors of Ideal observer theory.

is good/right/permissible= X is approved by ideal observer. An ideal observer is one who is in the best place to make moral statements. Either he/ she is a good human being, less biased, well informed of relevant details, able to reason well and so. Moral statements would be determined by a specific kind of person. This will help moral facts from becoming arbitrary. It could make this theory Universalist and can enable it to withstand the criticisms levied against other form of ethical subjectivism.

4. Divine command Theory- This theory asserts that what is moral is determined by what God commands and that for a person to be moral is to follow his commands. Roughly, it is the view that morality is somehow dependent upon God and that moral obligation consists in obedience to God's commands. It includes the claim that morality is ultimately based on the commands or character of God and that morally right action is one that God commands or requires. The specific content of these divine commands varies according to particular religion and particular views of the divine command theorists. The theory has many defenders such as Thomas Aquinas, Robert Adams, and Philip Quinn. However, this theory has impact on philosophical dealings of concepts by Immanuel Kant, John Lock etc. The theory generally teaches that moral truth does not exist independent of God and that morality is determined by divine commands. Stronger versions of the theory assert that God's command is the only reason that a good action is moral, while weaker variations cast divine command as a vital component within a greater

reason. Divine command theorists believe that there are objective moral standards that are same for everyone and are independent of individual beliefs. These moral standards are true for everyone regardless of whether or not they believe them or know them. These ultimate moral standards exist in command given by God. God commands only good things; he would never command a person to act immorally. God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving. God commanded those things in order to do what is good for us as humans and his commands are automatically morally right.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

a Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

2 What is individual subjectivism?

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3 What are the possible objections towards the theory of Ethical subjectivism?

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12.4 DAVID HUME ON ETHICAL SUBJECTIVISM

David Hume (1711-1776) was a Scottish historian, economist, and philosopher. Hume’s examination of controversy regarding the foundations of morality is found principally in two works, *Treatise of Human Nature*, and *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. He took a naturalistic approach to human affairs. Hume rejected the idea that morality and politics could be based on reasoned agreement about human happiness. The ethical theory of Hume is based upon his empiricist theory of mind. He asserts four basic principles in his empiricists theory- (1) Reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, but rather is slave of passions. (2) Moral distinctions are not derived from reason (3) Moral distinctions are derived from moral sentiments; feelings of approval or disapproval by the spectator who contemplate a character trait or action. (4) Some virtues and vices are natural, others like justice are artificial. He thought that human reason could not decide questions about value. There are no rational answers to questions about good, right, wrong etc. So, for example, he thought that debates between Protestants

and Catholics about how people should live cannot be decided by reference to an objective account of human happiness, and cannot not be known through the use of reason. Morality and justice does not require an all-powerful ruler because our emotions occasionally incline us towards the concern of others. Many philosophers believed that reason could train our actions and emotions. However, for Hume, reason reveals only the relationship between objects. It does not reveal what we should do. Reason can be a source of knowledge and can inform us about the causal connection between things, but it cannot be a source of motivation. In simple words, reason could tell us about how the world is but it cannot tell us how the world ought to be. He accepts from Hobbes that motives play a pre-eminent role in determination of virtue but those motives are not self-interested. Humans may be predominantly self-interested, but an accurate review of their behaviour reveals situations where if private interest is separate from public then publicly interested act was the one performed. He observes that our judgments about morality of particular actions and objects depend upon their usefulness. But this usefulness should not be confused with self-interest like, Hobbes. He believes that we care about social usefulness when it is not in our own interest. Usefulness pleases me not because it is useful to me but because it is useful to the society. The chief merit of Hume's thought of moral philosophy is of an emotion, he called 'sympathy,' by which he meant the sentiment that is aroused in us when we see a fellow being suffer. He says that whenever this happens, we are filled with a desire to help because we ourselves are suffering as we watch the grief or pain of the other. He repeated that moral action flows not from reason but from sentiment. Emotion is that property which is within us which seeks happiness and eschews misery. Reason can only analyse a situation and estimate the balance of happiness or unhappiness likely to result from any action we may take, but reason by itself can never induce action. That is why he wrote that Reason is the slave of passion. Hume rejected the efforts of rationalists and voluntarists who gave morality a supernatural foundation. The moral rationalists believe that the moral distinctions are based on transcendental principles, which oblige all rational creatures. Rationalists or objectivists tell us that there is immutable truth: parents are always to be obeyed, siblings must never interact sexually, and incest is immoral. Nevertheless, these principles are constantly violated in nature. Morality is a practical affair, one that involves volitions and actions. Neither abstract rational principles nor reason nor Deity is capable of providing the motivational force that is essential to morality. One of the questions, Hume sets to answer in his moral philosophy is, where does morality lie; where does the foundation of morality lie? He considers that it lies in human nature.

Hume's challenge to ethics begins with an investigation into the relationship between reason and action. Reasons, Hume considers as an ability to determine truth, beliefs, falsehood. It discovers truth such as $2+2=4$ and falsehood such as $2+2=5$. It also helps in determining relationship between cause and effect. But it cannot motivate an action, questions regarding why we ought to perform a particular action? Reason cannot tell us which actions we ought to act and not act. It can determine that the act of drinking soda lets one to gain weight but it says nothing about the purpose. Reason can tell us how to achieve the goals but this need to be based on human passions or sentiments. Reason alone cannot trigger an action. Hume argues that morality arises from feeling but it is or should be informed by reason. This means that reason may be able to give us information

but an action is ultimately led by passions or feelings. Reason is the tool that assists those passions by determining the facts of one's actions. For instance, Reason can determine that consistent lying leads to an unhappy world but it cannot tell us that we should not tell lies. It is only passions, which motivates us to tell the truth.

Hume said that morality can be found within. When you observe an immoral act, you do not find any right or wrong about the situation when you consider only the objects involved in the act. "Only when you turn your reflection you find a sentiment of disapprobation", then you will find a right or wrong about the situation? Hume said that this was only a feeling or sentiment though. Therefore morality is not something because of our reason, for we could not find the existence of good or bad while examining the situation with our reason. Our reason told us only facts about what happened and how it happened. Morality then must a sentiment or feeling. Hume uses the example of the philosophical view of colors, heat, and other such "qualities." Hume says that modern philosophy considers such things as colors, heat, and sound as simply perceptions and not definite qualities of any object. Colors and heat are objects of our observation, to be sure, but it cannot be said for sure that such things are properties of an object. Take an apple for example, we see red, but red is our perception and is not necessarily an actual quality of the apple. To go even further we cannot even say for fact that an apple exists, and if the apple does not exist than surely red cannot be a quality of it. All we really know is that we perceive an apple and in our perceptions it is red. This does not also imply the existence or qualities of the apple. Hume compares this type of thought to morality. Hume is trying to show that like observations of color and heat, morality is not something that can be found, for us, in an object, but instead morality is something, which only exists within our world and comes from the sentiments in us.

Hume seems to be correct in declaring that morality cannot be judged through the senses. We can only know what is afforded to us by our senses and our senses do not tell us when something is wrong or right. Something only becomes wrong or right when someone applies their feelings about certain actions to what they have seen or heard. The evidence for this is the disparity in people's moral beliefs: what offends one person's moral sentiments does not always offend another. While many people believe, it is morally offensive to commit suicide in any situation, but in many cultures it is more honorable to kill oneself than to admit defeat in a battle. These people did not see suicide in that situation as immoral. Morality is not something that is intrinsic in the objects or the action, since two different people would come to two different conclusions about the action of suicide. Instead, it must be, as Hume says; morality must be within us as a personal sentiment. According to Hume, value cannot be deduced from fact.

12.5 LET US SUM UP

Ethical Subjectivism is a met-ethical view, which considers that the truth-value of moral judgments depends upon the approver or utterer. However, one should not confuse this with Emotivism. For the ethical subjectivists, there are no moral facts independent of the individual mind i.e. relating to attitudes, emotions, and

feelings. Ethical subjectivism is of different types- Simple subjectivism, Individual subjectivism, Ideal observer theory, and Divine command theory. David Hume's theory of morality highlights instances of ethical subjectivism as he considers human passion to be the foundation of morality. He, unlike other objectivists, gave the higher position to passion over and above reason. Reason, according to him is only a tool to administer passions but passions are prime motivators of action.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

a Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

2 What are the four important basic principles, according to David Hume?

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3 "Reason is the slave of passions"- what is the meaning of this statement?

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12.6 KEYWORDS

Moral anti-realism: Moral anti-realism is a position that holds that there are no objective values independent of human attitude, feelings, beliefs, etc.

Passion: It is a synonym for emotion, feelings and opposed to reason.

12.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERNCES

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12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to check your progress I

1. Moral anti-realism holds that there are no objective values independent of human attitude, feelings, beliefs, etc. Ethical subjectivism is one among the variants of moral anti-realism.

There are four types of Moral anti-realism. They are – Ethical subjectivism, non-cognitivism, moral nihilism and moral skepticism.

Answers to check your progress II

1. Individualist subjectivism-. It is effectively a form of Egoism, which maintains that human being ought to pursue what is in his/her self-interest exclusively. Moral statements are descriptions of speaker's attitudes. When I say abortion is wrong I mean nothing more than what I disapprove abortion. Like, X is right/good/permissible= I approve of X and X is wrong/bad/forbidden= I disapprove of X.

2 There are two strong objections against ethical subjectivism. They are-

a) If moral subjectivism is true then everyone is infallible about moral beliefs. But human beings are not infallible about moral beliefs. We keep changing our minds. At one point of time, I could say that "abortion is morally acceptable" and at the other point of time I could change my mind and believe that "abortion is not morally acceptable."

b) If moral subjectivism is true then everyone would be correct in their moral judgments but we could be wrong sometimes. There could be no moral disagreements. In simple words, ethical subjectivism cannot endorse moral disagreements. For instance, if Barb says that Infanticide is sometimes ok then it means that Barb approves infanticide under some circumstances. If Karb says that Infanticide is wrong then it means that she disapproves infanticide under all circumstances. But that Barb approves and Karb disapproves both are true. They do disagree.

Answers to check your progress III

1. The ethical theory of Hume is based upon his empiricist theory of mind. He asserts four basic principles in his empiricists theory- (1) Reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, but rather is slave of passions. (2) Moral distinctions are not derived from reason (3) Moral distinctions are derived from moral sentiments; feelings of approval or disapproval by the spectator who contemplate a character trait or action. (4) Some virtues and vices are natural, others like justice are artificial. He thought that human reason could not decide questions about value.

2. "Reason is the slave of passions"- David Hume made this statement in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. He means that passions supply motivational force towards or against different objects. But, reason supplies information about different objects. There is no conflict between reason and passions. It is that passions are overpowering because they set ends and enact plans that reason has made. However, Reason has no power without passions. Reason on its own can never produce any action or cannot give rise to volition. Passion is the original existence and modification of existence. For instance, when one is hungry, he is actually possessed with the passion, and in that emotion he has no more reference to any object.

UNIT 13 EMOTIVISM: CHARLES STEVENSON*

Emotivism: Charles
Stevenson

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Definition
- 13.3 The Significance of Emotivism in Moral Philosophy
- 13.4 Philosophical Views
- 13.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.6 Key Words
- 13.7 Further Readings and References
- 13.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit provides:

An introductory understanding and significance of emotivism in moral and ethical philosophy.

Many aspects of emotivism have been explored by philosophers in the history of modern philosophy but this unit focuses Charles Stevenson's version of emotivism.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Emotivism is a meta-ethical theory in moral philosophy, which was developed by the American philosopher Charles Stevenson (1908-1978). He was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1908. He studied philosophy under G E Moore and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and was most influenced by the latter. From 1933 onwards, and continuing after the war, he developed the emotive theory of ethics at the University of Harvard. Stevenson's contributions were largely in the area of meta-ethics. Post-war debates in the field of ethics were characterized by 'the linguistic turn' in philosophy, and the increasing emphasis of scientific knowledge on philosophy, especially under the influence of the school of Logical Positivism. Questions such as, do 'scientific facts' play a role in ethical considerations? how far feelings and emotions influence our understanding of morality?, became significant. Therefore, to respond to these and related issues, philosophers developed different ethical theories. Stevenson was one of the philosophers who developed the theory of emotivism against this backdrop, and defended his theory to justify how feelings and non-cognitive attributes constitute our understanding of morality and moral judgments. A J Ayer, a key philosopher in the logical positivist school, in his book *Language, Truth and Logic*, argues that moral judgments are not verifiable i.e. they are neither analytic

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statements nor statements of fact. They are, instead, merely affective and emotional expressions of one's approval or disapproval of some action by a person. This is the view which was eventually more fully developed by Charles Stevenson in his book *Ethics and Language* (1944), and formed the basis of the theory of emotivism. He also discussed this theory in his articles such as the "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms" (1937) and "Persuasive Definition" (1938).

13.2 DEFINITION

The term emotivism essentially refers to a theory about moral judgments, sentences, words and speech acts; it raises questions about the nature of our evaluation of judgments in these fields – primarily, whether our judgments in these domains are factual or not?

Emotivism is a meta-ethical theory which raises questions about the definition of ethical terms like "good". In "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," Stevenson's concern is to provide a "relevant definition of "good". He claims that to be an adequate definition it must be a comprehensive definition that allows the term to specify all that needs to be said about it; it must be unambiguous; and it may involve several defined meanings, rather than one, and in this sense all the meanings will be considered relevant to an understanding of the term good (Stevenson: 1937). Stevenson argues to reject the traditional 'interest theories of ethics', which according to him state the ethical problem in terms of whether *it is desired by me* (Hobbes) or whether *it is approved by all people* (Hume)? In rejecting these theories, Stevenson points out that a revised theory must meet three commonsense criteria, which are not met by the 'interest theories. First, that people must be able to sensibly disagree about whether something is good, and this rules out the first form of the interest theories, i.e. desired by me. Second, "goodness" must urge people to act for its sake. A person who recognizes something to be "good" must also be motivated to act in its favor than he otherwise would have, and therefore this rules out the second form of the interest theories, i.e. approved by all. A person may recognize the approval by all for something, and yet may not want to act on it. Third, the "goodness" of anything must not be verifiable solely by use of the scientific method, i.e. ethical questions cannot be reduced to either that of psychology or to an empirical testing of what people want. The question of 'what is goodness' cannot be reduced to a set of scientifically knowable or testable thesis (Stevenson: 1937).

Classical non-cognitivist theories maintain that moral judgments and speech acts function primarily to express and to influence the state of mind or attitudes rather than to describe, report or represent facts. Emotivists, as belonging to the tradition of non-cognitivists also say ethical judgments are not statements of facts. In other words, emotivists deny any moral facts, or moral words like good, bad, wrong, right have any factual moral properties. According to them, moral claims cannot be evaluated on the basis of truth and falsity. The key criterion according to emotivists is that the attitude expressed by a person in terms of moral judgments is not cognitive in nature but that it has a motivational element. Therefore, emotivism claims that moral judgments express emotions, and that these emotions can be approved and disapproved, but cannot be described or analyzed in the manner in which we evaluate statements of fact. However, we have to understand that emotivism is not classic subjectivism.

According to classical subjectivism, while making moral judgment, we assert our emotions along with expressing them i.e. our ethical assertions will always be true (unless we're lying, and that is a different issue altogether)! This position does not allow us to account for moral disagreements, which we encounter all the time, and therefore is inadequate for understanding moral issues. Emotivism on the other hand opines that while making moral judgment, we are merely expressing our emotion or state of mind, and not asserting our emotions. This entails a different understanding of the uses of language (statement making, commanding, exclaiming, etcetera), and does not have to do with the factual assertion of our emotions.

13.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EMOTIVISM IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Ethical emotivism is considered one of the major twentieth-century ethical theories that emerged as an alternative to Utilitarian and Kantianism. The non-cognitive attitudes are given more importance in Stevenson's emotivism. Here, non-cognitivism emerged as a form of anti-positivism. The dominance of science and particularly logical positivism in discourse made it very difficult to understand ethical judgments. Since science was dominant it was natural to see everything from scientific framework. Thus, moral judgments, moral sentences, moral words were understood from scientific frameworks and Stevenson and many other philosophers were not convinced that moral judgments, moral statements or moral words should be understood by scientific framework or as statements of fact. Hence Stevenson took this problem seriously and developed meta-ethical theory, i.e. emotivism where he tried to prove that moral statements moral judgments or moral words are not empirical or scientific facts but they can be understood by emotive meaning. There emerged lots of debates on the issue of fact and value and their differentiation. Stevenson drew a parallel between scientific judgment and ethical judgment. When there is a disagreement about a particular scientific judgment, it can be resolved by bringing agreement in beliefs. In the case of ethical judgment, there is a possibility of resolving the disagreement by bringing agreement in one's belief as well as one's attitude. One however can never be sure whether the ethical disagreement will resolve once there is agreement in terms of beliefs and attitudes of people concerned. Thus, emotivism is significant in the history of moral theory and philosophy (Satris: 1987).

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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2. What is the significance of emotivism in moral philosophy?

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3. How did emotivism emerge as a meta-ethical theory?

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13.4 PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

The discussion on ethical emotivism started long before Charles Stevenson and it is important to understand its history and background. Initially, the discussion was started by philosophers like G.E Moore and W.D. Ross in their books *Principia Ethica* and *Foundations of Ethics*, respectively. Moore was a moral cognitivist. He held that a moral judgment expresses a belief that can be subject to an assessment of truth or falsity. However, Moore was also a moral realist. He held that moral properties exist and that they make certain moral judgments true, yet these properties are not analyzable in scientific terms or in terms of verifiability. These properties, according to Moore, are non-natural; they are sui generis, simple, and intrinsic, hence indefinable and unanalyzable. Therefore, when we speak of the ‘good’ (property of a moral statement), it is essentially indefinable. It is an intuitive understanding of the term good. Moore asserts that “good” is indefinable and simple, and can only be known by intuition.

Although Moore initiated the discussion about emotivism, but because of his cognitivist position, he was criticized by A J Ayer, who redefined emotivism. In *Language, Truth and Logic*, Ayer offered an alternative account of morality. He argues that moral judgments are neither logical truths nor statements of fact, and therefore do not meet the verifiability criterion of meaning. According to Ayer, ethical concepts are pseudo-concepts or nonsense; they do not have any cognitive significance. They are value based judgments instead, merely an emotional expressions of one’s approval or disapproval of some action/s or person/ s. As expressions of approval or disapproval, they can be neither true nor false, any more than a tone of awe (indicating approval) or a tone of repulsion (indicating disapproval) can be true or false.

This view was fully developed by the American philosopher Charles Stevenson in *Ethics and Language*, and in his other articles. This period in western philosophy is characterized by an emphasized engagement with issues of language and the rise of the analytic method, which also influences discussions in ethics and other allied fields such as aesthetics, religion, etc. Stevenson works with this background, and distinguishes the factual aspect of a sentence from its emotive aspect. He argues that the significance of a moral judgment lies in its emotive impact. However, Stevenson differs from Ayer in pointing out that a moral judgment does not just express an agent’s approval or disapproval of something, but also encourages others to share in that belief, which is the basis of meaningful ethical conflict or difference. This is the reason why people argue about their moral views, and not just agree to disagree about them. Thus the main thesis of Stevenson’s emotivism is also based on the foundational problem that emerges with the distinction of fact and value, where issues of language use are divided

between the descriptive/scientific/factual use of language versus an emotive/ordinary/ value based use. Problems of ethics and morality function within the non-cognitive or value based domain of language, in distinction from a cognitive or factual domain.

In order to understand these problems three things need to be known in the context of emotivism. First, emotivists explain the fact that people are typically motivated to behave in accordance with their moral judgments. Emotivists identify moral judgments with feelings or attitudes. Cognitivists have some difficulties in explaining this motivational connection because they identify moral judgments with beliefs. Second, emotivism explains moral judgments which are based on non-naturalistic grounds. Third, emotivists explain the moral on the basis of empirical; that is, why moral characteristics differ in some non-moral or empirical respect.

However Stevenson tried to resolve the entire problem by understanding “good” in ethics. The discussion starts from the question, if X is good then how does one know that is good? What is the method or way which helps us to know that X is good? According to him, the word “good” has often been defined in terms of approval. However, it is not possible to get an appropriate understanding of good through this criterion, and it often leads to the conclusion, in philosophical debates, that good is indefinable. But according to emotivists, the best ethical understanding of good is a purely emotive use. For them, whether actions or things are good or not, can only be accessed through the categories of emotive approval or disapproval. This stance often leads to relativistic assessment of ethical values. For example, if someone kills a person because s/he has approved of the act. It is difficult to justify what is good, because someone else can justify that particular approved action itself to be wrong/bad. Further, an individual or group may approve some actions in one context, whereas some other individual or group may not approve the same action in another context. Hence the problem of relativistic moral evaluation of actions persists.

Stevenson discusses this problem in his book *Ethics and Language*. “Stevenson is exclusively concerned with the project of indicating a coherent and stable concept of meaning that will stand to emotive and other kinds of meaning as genus to species, and will be essentially tied to psychological or pragmatic aspects of language. No empirical claims are made; it is a matter of organizing what is already known.” (Satris: 1987, p. 80) Stevenson argues that there is confusion in these theses in terms of fact and value, and he reiterates the distinction between different uses of language – cognitive versus non-cognitive uses. According to him moral judgments are based on values (non-cognitive use of language) rather than facts (cognitive use of language). Therefore, emotivism emphasizes the value-based use of ethical language and its significance for moral philosophy. Stevenson’s argument is that an adequate account of goodness cannot be purely descriptive or fact based, since “ethical statements” or “ethical judgments” are made to influence others, and not to describe or give an account of a factual state of affairs. The problem arises for emotivism when there is some element of description in ethical judgments, but this is by no means that all judgments include descriptive content. Emotivists, on the other hand, argue that the major function of moral judgments is not to indicate facts, but to influence beliefs and actions. Instead of giving a factual account of people’s interests or beliefs, they are meant to change or intensify them. The question that arises of course is how does an

ethical sentence acquire its power of influencing people—what is the basis of its influence? Stevenson thinks that this power that moral judgments have to influence others comes from the “dynamic” use of words, which allow us the ability to express our feelings (interjections/exclamations), to create moods (poetry), or to incite people to certain actions or attitudes (oratory). The key distinction that Stevenson makes here is between the concepts of use and meaning: Meaning, according to him, cannot change with dynamic usage. For Stevenson, “meaning” is to be identified with those psychological connotations or the senses that a word’s utterance has a tendency to be connected with. The tendency must exist for all who speak the language; it must be persistent; and must be realizable more or less independently of determinate circumstances attending the word’s utterance, i.e. the meaning of the word must be objective, and may not be admitted to change with context. He argues that there is one kind of meaning that has an intimate relation to dynamic usage of language. This kind of meaning is emotive meaning.

The emotive meaning of a word is a tendency of a word, arising through the history of its usage, to produce (result from) affective responses in people. It is the immediate aura of feeling which hovers about a word. Such tendencies to produce affective responses cling to words very tenaciously. It would be difficult, for instance, to express merriment by using the interjection “alas.” Because of the persistence of such affective tendencies (among other reasons) it becomes feasible to classify them as “meanings.” (Stevenson, p. 23)

Emotive meaning “assists” the dynamic purpose of a moral judgment. Good, in general, has a pleasing emotive meaning, which allows it to be fitted to suggest favorable interest for a judgment. Hence, ‘this is good’ implies the meaning to be something akin to ‘I do like this; do so as well’. In the case of the moral usage of “good”, the ethical sentence differs from a command in as much as it enables one to make changes in a much more subtle way. The ethical or moral emotive meaning of “good” is not the same as the non-moral emotive meaning of “good” i.e. the moral emotive meaning of good is concerned with a stronger sense of approval, which also urges one to action. It is not only about the approval of the hearer and speaker. In the case of moral approval of something, a person experiences a sense of satisfaction or contentment when their judgment is acted upon; however, when it is not acted upon they experience indignation. Thus, the moral emotive meaning of “good”, for Stevenson, is approximately “I morally approve of this; do so as well.”

With this account in mind, Stevenson proceeds to show how his definition of “good” accounts for the possibility of sensible moral disagreement, which was not possible in the case of simple subjectivism. Stevenson first distinguishes between “disagreement in belief” and “disagreement in attitude”, to account for disagreement in moral interest, where “interest” is understood broadly to include moral approval. Stevenson sees all disagreement in ethics to always be a disagreement in interest.

It is disagreement in interest which takes place in ethics. When C says ‘This is good,’ and D says ‘No, it’s bad,’ we have a case of suggestion and counter-suggestion. Each one is trying to redirect the other’s interest. There obviously need be no domineering, since each may be willing to give ear to the other’s influence; but each is trying to move the other none the less. It is in this sense that they disagree. (Stevenson, p. 27)

Stevenson further argues that when two people disagree over an ethical matter they may not be able to resolve the disagreement through an assessment of the empirical considerations of the issue even if we assume that they each apply the empirical method exhaustively, consistently, and without error. Here he provides an example of an ethical disagreement that exists even though the two parties agree on all of the facts. For instance, A is of a sympathetic nature, and B isn't. They are arguing about whether a government spending on a public project would be good or not. Suppose that they discovered all the factual consequences of the government spending. It is still possible for A and B to disagree with one another on the moral position they take on the spending. The basis of their disagreement in interest is not because of limited factual knowledge, but simply from A's characteristic of being a sympathetic person or likewise B's characteristic of being cold. Or again, suppose, in the above argument, if we take the specific considerations of the two individuals involved – that A is poor and unemployed, and that B is rich. Here again, we can see that the disagreement may not occur due to different empirical facts. It would be due to their different social positions, together with their own specific self-interest. Both will mutually try to influence one another's beliefs, based on their approval or disapproval of the government spending. Both of them agree on the facts; however, do not agree in their attitude about the issue. Hence, science cannot resolve this disagreement. It is a disagreement in attitude and not a disagreement in belief. Their beliefs are the same, informed by the empirical facts; however, their attitudes are different towards the facts of the issue, which accounts for their disagreement. Importantly, Stevenson does not conclude that in the case of such moral disagreement there is no way to arrive at moral agreement, that is, agreement of moral approval. There is indeed a way. According to him, it is simply that this way is not a rational way—it is the way of non-rational persuasion.

When ethical disagreement is not rooted in disagreement in belief, is there any method by which it may be settled? If one means by "method" a rational method, then there is no method. But in any case there is a "way." Let's consider the above example, again, where disagreement was due to A's sympathy and B's coldness. Must they end up by saying, well it's just a matter of our having different temperaments? Not necessarily. A, for instance, may try to change the temperament of his opponent. He may pour out his enthusiasms in such a moving way—present the sufferings of the poor with such appeal—that he will lead his opponent to see life through different eyes. He may build up, by the contagion of his feelings, an influence which will modify B's temperament, and create in him sympathy for the poor which didn't previously exist. This is often the only way to obtain ethical agreement, if there is any way at all. It is persuasive, not empirical or rational; but i.e. no reason for neglecting it. (Stevenson, p. 19)

However in spite of Stevenson's logical conclusion for ethical emotivism, there are many philosophers who criticized this thesis later on such as Alasdair MacIntyre. Emotivism is charged with being unable to accommodate the important role of rational argument in moral discourse and dispute. Although, it emphasizes on how through moral discourses it influences other's behaviour. Sometimes scholars say emotivism is not a new theory but it's an extended version of non-cognitivism, and therefore there is nothing special to say. And sometimes it can also be possible to allege that it's a different version of subjectivism. In one sense of the term *subjectivist*, the emotivists could firmly reject this charge. Yet, this reply fails to confront the real misgivings behind the charge of subjectivism i.e. the concern that there are no possible standards of right and wrong other than one's own subjective feelings. In this sense, the emotivists were indeed

subjectivists. But this issue has also been contested by philosophers who argue for objective emotivism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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1. Highlight the main points of Stevenson’s emotivism?

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

The theory of Charles Stevenson on emotivism has a strong logical basis. The crux of the argument of emotivism is about understanding the moral term “good”. Therefore, in his theory of emotivism, Stevenson developed different criteria to define good. The basis of this discussion was the debates between the cognitive and non-cognitive understanding of moral judgments.

13.6 KEY WORDS

Judgment: the ability to make good decisions about what should be done.

Meaning: the idea that is represented by a word, phrase etc. In other words the idea that a person wants to express by using words, signs etc. but in moral philosophy philosophers understood this more as a subjective sense than objective.

Fact: something that truly exists and that has actual existence out there in the world.

13.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Emotivism emerged as an alternative moral ethical theory to utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. In the era of scientific dominance, where science was playing a key role to decide whether a moral judgement is acceptable or not, Emotivism tried to focus on the distinction between fact and value, and challenged that the problem of moral judgment cannot be resolved by the method of agreement or disagreement on the facts.
2. Emotivism emerged as a meta-ethical theory in order to resolve some fundamentals problems in moral philosophy. Defining the moral terms like good is one of the examples. In doing this it dealt with the debates of is-ought, fact-value problem in moral philosophy.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Some of the main points of Stevenson's emotivism are,
 - a. The significance of moral judgement lies in its emotive impact,
 - b. Ethical matter cannot be resolved through the assessment of the empirical considerations of the issue,
 - c. Ethical disagreement is a disagreement in attitude, not disagreement in belief.
 - d. Ethical disagreement can be resolved through non-rational persuasion.

UNIT 14 PRESCRIPTIVISM: R. M. HARE*

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Definition
- 14.3 The Significance of Prescriptivism in Moral Philosophy
- 14.4 Philosophical Views
- 14.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.6 Key Words
- 14.7 Further Readings and References
- 14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is,

To explain Hare's moral/ethical position about prescriptivism.

To provide an explanation about the role of prescriptivism in moral and ethical philosophy in general and the basic questions about the moral/ethical in particular.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

We can trace the seeds of prescriptivism in the philosophy of Socrates, Aristotle, Hume, Kant and Mill, but the main proponent of this meta-ethical theory was philosopher Richard Mervyn Hare (1919-2002). Through the analysis of moral discourse, Hare justified the preferences for utilitarianism. Hare served Royal Artillery in the Second World War and he was seized as a prisoner by Japan. This experience of second world war influenced Hare's life and philosophy, particularly his view that moral philosophy is obligatory in nature and helps people to be a moral being (King: 2004).

In moral philosophy, philosophers give their opinion/thought about moral problems and moral judgments and in this way everyone has their freedom to give their opinions. But according to Hare, the problem with this line of thought is that there is a lack of concern for others and rational thought is not put to use while formulating moral judgements. Hence the forementioned philosophers are considered as subjectivist or emotivists. But Hare says there is another set of philosophers who emphasize on the rationality. In other words, in answering moral questions like is or ought to be a rational activity. Therefore to understand moral questions, problems or issues one requires rationality. Thus in this case

you don't only think about yourself but you have to think about others also in your mind. These sets of philosophers are called descriptivist and sometimes naturalists as well. According to naturalists, moral judgments correspond to objective natural facts and can therefore be described.

Hare has taken these two opposite thoughts very seriously and tried to give a new direction and solution to moral questions. Dealing with these two problems as a result he developed an alternative moral theory called prescriptivism (Hare: 1965). According to Hare, moral judgments should be understood in terms of its normative and prescriptive meaning or element rather than its descriptive meaning or element.

R. M. Hare illustrated and developed Prescriptivism in his writings, mainly, *the Language of morals* (1952), *Moral Thinking* (1981), *Freedom and Reason* (1965). Hare claims that any moral term or predicate (Such as good, bad, right, wrong, etc.) can be understood on the basis of two principles, one is prescriptivity and another is universalizability. A moral judgement (Generally, Moral judgement is a sentence or statement predicated by moral term.) is universal and prescriptive in nature. If any sentence having a moral term that cannot be universalized and prescribed, it means that it cannot be used as a moral judgement. We can put this in a different manner that if we want our moral judgement to be translated in a moral action, then our moral judgement should have the potential to universalize and prescribe. Hare argues that if we combine the concept of universalizability and prescriptivity, we get preference utilitarianism. Preference utilitarianism states that the consequence of our action should be the maximization of satisfaction of people's preferences. In *Freedom and Reason* he took two positions such as prescriptivism argument and the utilitarian argument. These points will be discussed below in details. In the book, chapter six, he has outlined about his basic position with reference to a situation in which the interests of the two persons are only involved. In chapter seven in the same book, he argued about the utilitarian argument and covered cases in which the interests of more than two parties involved.

14.2 DEFINITION

Prescriptivism claims that a moral statement has an element of meaning which makes moral statements prescriptive in nature. In other words, prescriptivism is a thesis that tells us, when moral terms used to make moral judgements; it is a logical inference that they used to make a universal prescription. Moral statements have two elements one is descriptive and second is prescriptive. A prescription means to tell someone to do something, to prescribe, in such a manner that one can dispose that prescription into action. When we prescribe a course of action it commits us to agree to an imperative to ourselves and to others that an action is done. When we make a sincere agreement then it may be said that one is positively willing to the action being acted on. The prescriptions that rest on universals principles are called universal prescriptions. Universal prescribing not only tells someone to do something but it also advice to do something, we can imply the existence of reasons by advice these reasons are expressible universal principles. Universal prescription tells to perform an action because it consists of some characteristics, so in prescribing that action, all actions having those characteristics are prescribed. If we take "ought" as an

example, in the statement of the form, “P ought to do A” to give a moral judgement, then it takes the principle, “anyone in C ought to do A” as a presupposition, so P’s doing A would count as an instance of doing A in C. Thus, according to this principle, “if you are in C, you ought to do A and if I am in C then I ought to do A”. The implication of this later statement would be “Do A in C” and “Let me do A in C”. If we agree on this it further implies that one is inclined that this act is to be done by oneself and the others. Thus, when moral judgements are given by ought-statements, an advice is used to be given by means of these statements how we ourselves and others are to act and these devices are based on general principles that the act is to be done by oneself and others. (Dahl: 1987).

Descriptive element of moral statements varies from culture to culture and person to person. This element is person-time-space-specific. On the other hand, prescriptive element of moral statements is constant in nature. That is why prescriptivism makes a ground for moral disagreement and moral judgement.

Hare’s version of prescriptivism holds that moral judgments prescribe rather than merely describe or express feelings. He further argues that moral prescriptions differ from non-moral one in the manner that the former is characterised by universalizability. One who judges an action to be morally good must be ready to judge any relevantly similar action as morally good. This idea of universalizability may be influenced by Kant. Hare thinks that prescriptivism is best captured in the ways moral judgments guide action by avoiding moral relativism and providing a basis for the rational justification of moral claims. Indeed, he argued that the only rational moral view is a kind of utilitarianism. Thus he brought together two major thoughts of moral theory i.e. the Kantian tradition (captured by his notion of universalizability) and utilitarianism. He brought to all of his work deep insights, a lucid and elegant prose, and a commitment to the importance of ethics and rational inquiry.

14.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESCRIPTIVISM IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Hare’s prescriptivism is very important as it has helped people to understand moral judgments from universal and rational point of view. He has developed prescriptivism because it applies to larger audiences or public. Certainly prescriptivism deals with bigger ethical problems such as whether moral judgments are to be drawn on the basis of rationality or individual choices or opinions. Hare has also dealt with the question of ‘is’ and ‘ought to be’. He did not follow the traditional ethical theories, rather he was critical of all the existing theories of that time. That is why we see he was critical of emotivism, descriptivism, utilitarianism and deontological theory of Kant. Hare was a philosopher engaged with all the existing moral theories and did not find answers for certain questions. That is why he derived some of the principles from those existing theories and developed prescriptivism. For example, in his writings he supported some elements of emotivism but he disagreed with many other elements. Hare claims that moral statements/judgements do not describe anything and do not express attitude of the individuals. For him, Moral judgements are imperative in nature.

Check Your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the significance of prescriptivism in moral philosophy?

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2. Why do call prescriptivism a meta-ethical theory?

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14.4 PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

Hare is one of the most prolific writers on ethics since Moore. He was influenced by many philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Moore, Russell. Hume influenced him on fact and value distinction; Moore and Russell influenced his thinking of how philosophy is all about an investigation of concepts; and from Kant he draw the idea of universality and reason in moral practices. He was also influenced by utilitarianism. In other words, broadly his ethical theory prescriptivism is developed out of critical engagements and disagreements with three philosophical thoughts namely emotivism, Kantian ethics (Deontology of Kant) and utilitarianism. We find that in his book *The Language of Morals* he makes a distinction between prescriptive and descriptive meaning and understanding from rational point of view. Prescriptive meaning is defined in relation to imperatives.

A statement is prescriptive if it entails, if necessary in conjunction with purely factual statements, at least one imperative; and to assent to an imperative is to prescribe action. Descriptive meaning is defined in relation to truth-conditions i.e. a statement is descriptive to the extent that factual conditions for its correct application define its meaning (Hare: 1952).

But later in his book *Freedom and Reason* (1965) he clarifies his position on various issues and revised his thesis. Benn (2002) puts Hare's revised position as:

1. Hare accepts that moral predicates (e.g. good, bad, right, etc.) have a descriptive meaning,
2. This descriptive meaning is secondary to them (Moral predicate),

3. Primary meaning of Moral predicates is non-descriptive in nature, which is prescriptive meaning,
4. Hare accepts the distinction between fact and values,
5. We cannot make any logical inference about moral judgements from descriptive (factual) characteristics of the world.

However, all these above discussed aspects made his ethical theory very rational, practical and applicable for everybody. Hence, Hare was not only concerned about moral issues intellectually but also took moral conduct and practices seriously. This could have happened due to his experience during Second World War mentioned earlier. This relation of theory to practice gives Hare's work strength and an added dimension. One of the most important things in Hare's moral philosophy is the dimension of reason and rationality. Your moral practices are guided or judged by certain reason, truth and arguments and therefore it is prescriptive as well. This might be the reason Hare emphasized universality with prescriptivism. For him moral judgments are not only universal but prescriptive. Moral judgments are universalizable". Universalizability is a characteristic of descriptive sentence according to Hare, which, one can apply to predicates in the exact manner or relevantly as well. (Coles: 1963).

The rationality in morality can be easily understood when we understand the two features of Hare's moral judgment, namely prescriptivity and universalizability.

If you want to decide what you ought (moral judgement) to do or what you can prescribe to yourself in a situation, and at the same time we want to universalize this action (ought). In this given scenario, you choose an action to perform, but you realize that when you universalize this action, suppose this action gives birth a prescription which is unacceptable to you. In that case, you cannot universalize the proposed action, it means the prescription yielded from this action cannot become an "ought".

A general moral principle consists of two features: Prescriptivity and universalizability, these two features are the main foundation of Hare's theory. Universal terms are different from singular terms (such as "Socrates"). But "maxims" can be universal and not singular or particular, as maxims do not refer to individuals, they can be regarded as universal and not specific, what differentiates in identifying an extensive class of agent is the degree (More specificity is involved in "Always give the true evidence" than "Always tell the truth" and more generality than "Always give true evidence on oath"). His paper "Universalizability" (1954) stressed one's personal responsibility in making decisions that are also decisions of principle. The next important development came in a second book, *Freedom and Reason* (1965), in which the formal features of prescriptivity and universalizability generate a "Golden principle" as a form of argument. Here in order to articulate this golden principle in the context of universalizability and prescriptivity, one needs to understand one example which Hare (1965) himself has given in his writings.

A owes money to *B*, and *B* owes money to *C*, and it is the law that creditors may exact their debts by putting their debtors into prison. *B* asks himself, 'Can I say that I ought to take this measure against *A* in order to make him pay?' He is no doubt inclined to do

this, or wants to do it. Therefore, if there were no question of universalizing his prescriptions, he would assent readily to the singular prescription 'Let me put *A* into prison'. But when he seeks to turn this prescription into a moral judgment, and say, 'I ought to put *A* into prison because he will not pay me what he owes', he reflects that this would involve accepting the principle 'Anyone who is in my position ought to put his debtor into prison if he does not pay'. But then he reflects that *C* is in the same position of unpaid creditor with regard to himself *B* and that the cases are otherwise identical; and that if anyone in this position ought to put his debtors into prison, then so ought *C* to put him *B* into prison. And to accept the moral prescription 'C ought to put me into prison' would commit him (since, as we have seen, he must be using the word "ought" prescriptively) to accepting the singular prescription 'Let *C* put me into prison'; and this he is not ready to accept. But if he is not, then neither can he accept the original judgment that he *B* ought to put *A* into prison for debt. Notice that the whole of this argument would break down if ought were not being used both universalizably *and prescriptively*; for if it were not being used prescriptively, the step from *C* ought to put me into prison to Let *C* put me into prison would not be valid.

This above mentioned example is to understand moral judgment on the basis of universalizability, prescriptivity and utilitarian principle. Hare adopted the utilitarian method because it involves rationality into its moral consideration. In order to understand the utilitarian aspect and universal principle this statement or example is very helpful because in first case it does not clarify about others involvement in your act where as in second case it involves. This helps one to understand the golden principle aspect which is mentioned in the above example. Hare makes a logical relation between universal prescriptivism and utilitarianism (preference utilitarianism). If someone wants that his or her preferences should be counted in the moral judgement done by others, than he or she should count other's preferences into consideration to make his or her own moral judgement. The implication of this view is that moral deliberator should take all preferences into consideration when he makes a moral judgement as if these preferences are his/her own. Here, Hare does not entirely reject emotivism. He says that prescription is the central element of ethical language. He opposes descriptivism, which is a theory that states that moral predicates (such as, good, bad, right, ought, etc.) are the description of moral features of reality.

He argues that prescriptive language has a logical structure and it follows rational frameworks of reasoning. For instance, there could be imperative inference, just as there could be factual inference. Moral prescriptions entail imperatives. But moral prescriptions are more than that; they are not only imperative in nature, but are also universalizable. For example, to say, "You ought not to kill animals" is to say "do not kill animals."

Piers Benn in his article "R M Hare" highlights the importance of intention or will in universal prescription. In the words of Benn,

The prescriptivity of moral judgments also led Hare to an eccentrically stretched position on weakness of will. If one sincerely addresses an "ought" judgment to oneself (e.g. 'I ought to give regularly to charity'), it follows from Hare's theory that one intends to act on it. If the intention is absent (what most people call weakness of will) then it follows either that no universal prescription was ever made, or that it was psychologically impossible to act on it. Philosophers with a less inexhaustible theoretical determination would conclude that since weakness of will (*akrasia*) plainly is real, then any theory that entails its denial must be wrong.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What role do rationality, and utilitarianism play in Hare’s prescriptivism?

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14.5 LET US SUM UP

Prescriptivism is a meta-ethical theory, because it deals with fundamental questions in moral philosophy like whether moral judgments should to be understood on the basis of rationality or individual choices or opinions; the question of ‘is’ and ‘ought’ in moral philosophy. Hare’s moral philosophy is grounded on three features or principles such as universalizability, prescriptivity and the utilitarian principle.

14.6 KEY WORDS

15 Rationality: the belief or principle that actions and opinions should be based on reason rather than on emotion or personal opinions.

Universalism: it is a theoretical doctrine and philosophical concept which means some ideas have universal application or applicability.

Utilitarianism: a philosophical and ethical theory which has the belief that a morally good action is one that helps the greatest number people or brings happiness to greatest number of people.

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14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Hare's prescriptivism is very important in the sense it has helped philosophers to understand moral judgments from universal and rational point of view. He has developed prescriptivism because it applies to larger audiences or public. Certainly prescriptivism is dealing with bigger ethical problems like whether moral judgments are to be drawn on the basis of rationality or individual choices or opinions. Hare has also dealt with the question of is and ought to be. The most important point is he did not follow the traditional ethical theories as it is rather he was critical of all the existing theories of that time.
2. Prescriptivism is a meta-ethical theory because it deals with bigger ethical problems such as whether moral judgments are to be drawn on the basis of rationality or individual choices or opinions. Hare has also dealt with the question of is and ought to be.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

The rationality in morality can be easily understandable when we understand the two features of Hare's moral philosophy. These two features of moral reasoning are, basically, prescriptivity and universalizability. Hare talks about an action on the basis of universal principle and prescriptivity, he is keeping in mind that it should be applicable to everybody and in every circumstance. So here one is always concern about "others". Hence, this inclusivity aspect about others in Hare's moral philosophy involved rationality and preferences utilitarianism as well.

UNIT 15 INTRODUCTION TO APPLIED ETHICS*

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Basic Concepts
- 15.3 Introduction to Applied Ethics
- 15.4 Applied Ethics: Definition
- 15.5 Approaches to understand Moral Content
- 15.6 Problem of Method and Justification
- 15.7 Analysis
- 15.8 Let us Sum Up
- 15.9 Key Words
- 15.10 Further Readings and References
- 15.11 Answers to Check your Progress

15.0 OBJECTIVES

Applied Ethics or practical ethics is a field which is encountered by us in each and every sphere of our lives. The objective of the present unit is:

- Contextualise Applied Ethics as a discipline under the broad field of Ethics.
- Establish the distinctive nature of ethical inquiry as a normative study
- Define the key terms used in the field of ethics
- Discuss the three approaches to the study of ethics

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- Analyse the approaches to understand moral content
- Discuss the problem of method and justification

15.1 INTRODUCTION

It is believed that applied ethics has the goal of resolving practical problems by implementing general moral theories. However, it is observed that it is not possible to have a straightforward movement towards practical judgements by appealing either to moral theories or any general moral principles (such as “one ought not to inflict harm or risk of harm”; “one ought to treat people fairly and with equal respect”; etc.). That is why there appears to be a gap between “theory and practice”. Theory and principles should always be supplemented by human experiences, right action, motivation, and the like. Peter Singer argues that ethics should not be viewed as an ideal system that is only noble in theory but not in practice. The meaningfulness of ethical judgements lies in the fact that they guide our practice. However, in situations involving dilemmas, moral rules may conflict. Let us define a few key concepts, which are related to the field and are frequently used in any discussion on ethics.

15.2 BASIC CONCEPTS

15.2.4 Ethics

Ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning character. As a science of character ethics systematises and recommends concepts of right and wrong behaviour. It seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts, like ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘good’, ‘bad’, functioning of a society. Moreover, another way of understanding morality is to see it as synonymous with ‘goodness’ or ‘rightness.’ Morality is the differentiation of decisions, actions, and intentions between the ones that are ‘right’ or ‘good’ and the ones that are ‘wrong’ or ‘bad.’ Morality in a descriptive sense incorporates the social mores, codes of conduct, and cultural or personal values. Simply put, morality refers to Rules and Duties that govern our behaviour, such as: “Do not hurt people”, “Be fair”, “Respect others”, “Always tell the truth”, and several others.

Values

Values are our judgements about what is important in terms of the end and goal of human life. Values can be understood as those states of affairs which are desired by and for people. At the level of individual as well as the society we work towards increasing them. Examples include Health, Wealth, Happiness, Freedom, Equality, Welfare, Justice, Democracy, Rule of Law and others.

Virtues

These are the required characteristic traits which are desirable for both the individual as well as for the good functioning of the society. Examples include Courage, Self-control, Justice, Temperance, Wisdom and others.

15.2.4 Ethics

Ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning character. As a science of character ethics systematises and recommends concepts of right and wrong behaviour. It seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts, like ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘vice’ and ‘virtue’ and several others. In this sense Ethics is also defined as “the philosophy of morality” or a “philosophical study of morality” i.e. an academic study of morals, duties, values, and virtues with an aim to find their theoretical relationships. The discipline raises and answers several questions, like, What is right or wrong in human conduct?, What allows us to judge any person or action as good, bad, right, or wrong? How do we make moral decisions and judgements? Which theories of conduct are valid or invalid, and why? Are there universally applicable principles or laws, or should each situation be decided on its own? Are our actions like, helping, stealing, killing, compassion, lying, donating, cheating, and others right or wrong, and why or why not? Ethics guides us about the right ways to live our everyday life by delineating rules, principles and values. In this sense it also investigates whether morals, duties, values and virtues work in practice or not. In ordinary language the words ethics and morality are also used in an interchangeable manner.

Ethical Laws/Principles

These are the general concepts used to sum up a range of morals, values and virtues, in order to derive moral imperatives. All our actions are tested against Ethical Principles.

There are primarily three approaches, which can be adopted to study ethics:

Descriptive Ethics: Descriptive ethics is the study of morality from a scientific point of view. Here, the description and explanation of the moral life focusses on the way it is manifested in one's moral experience and society's moral code. Descriptive ethics is the scientific study or the empirical knowledge of moral phenomena in the life of an individual and in the structure and functioning of the society. This branch of ethics takes into account the beliefs people hold about morality and conceptual models in order to gain insight into the moral phenomena, behaviour, and thinking. This type of ethics looks into the decision-making process of people based on which actions are categorized as right or wrong, and the characteristics of moral agents are judged as virtuous/vicious.

Normative Ethics: Normative ethics studies the systematic construction of a valid ethical system (a set of moral standards of evaluation and moral rules of conduct applicable to all mankind). Here the task is to evaluate what is right or wrong and lay out moral rules for actions, behaviour, and ways of life. The purpose of normative ethics is to discover or construct a consistent system of moral norms that stands valid for everyone. The objective of ethical theories is to guide us to know and perform what is morally right and to avoid what is wrong. Some significant normative ethical theories are;

- **Deontology:** Deontology is a duty-based ethics. We have a moral duty to do things which are right and to not do things which are wrong. According to Immanuel Kant moral principles and laws guide the individual's choices of what they ought to do. Kantian reasoning is called non-consequentialist or deontological since it does not look at the consequence but rather considers the law or duty which governs our actions. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) Kant grounds our duty and morality in rationality itself. He postulates the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which argues that one must act in such a manner that one can simultaneously will that the maxim of one's action (the reasoning which guides our intention) should become universal law.
- **Consequentialism:** According to this view, the consequences or results of one's actions are regarded as being the ultimate basis for any judgment about the rightness or wrongness of that particular action. According to classical Utilitarianism, given by Bentham (1823) and Mill (1863), happiness is the

only consequences which matters. That action is said to be right which brings about more happiness in comparison to any other action in the given situation. The good entails in the greatest good of the greatest number by minimizing pain and maximizing happiness.

- **Virtue Ethics:** Morality is not just about the consequences or abiding by moral laws and duties, instead it is about the virtuous character. Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle emphasises a study of human nature i.e. certain characteristic virtues that we value in ourselves and others. He focuses on what and how to be a good person and explains that to live a meaningful life people should develop good virtues of character, like, honesty, integrity and courage and the like.

15.2.5.3 Meta-ethics or Analytic ethics: Meta-ethics or analytic ethics is considered to be logically prior to normative ethics since its subject matter of inquiry are the very presuppositions of normative ethics. It does a two-fold inquiry; the first task is a semantical and conceptual analysis, to be undertaken in order to analyse the meaning of the terms, i.e., words and sentences, used in moral discourse. The second task is a *Meta* inquiry into the nature of ethics itself, to be undertaken in order to analyse the logic of moral reasoning.

15.2.6 Is-Ought Gap

Unlike the descriptive statements which are assertions about the physical world of senses (consisting of space, objects, time and causation) and laws governing it, the normative statements are assertions about what is good, right, wrong, and what should be done. Descriptive statements are verifiable by observation through listening, touching, looking, smelling or tasting by the help of our five sense organs. It is evident that the criterion of truth, which applies to factual statements, does not apply to normative statements since they include value judgments, prescriptions and commands. This gap is also known as the “is-ought gap” i.e. it is not possible to derive an “ought” from an “is.” It tells us that normative statements cannot be derived from any collection of facts without a previously accepted normative statement as premise (Newton, 2013, 5).

15.3 INTRODUCTION TO APPLIED ETHICS*

Applied ethics is a branch of philosophy whose subject matter is the application of moral rules, principles, or concepts to real life issues like, Euthanasia, abortion, surrogacy, and several others. The term “applied ethics” or “practical ethics” has recent origins as it gained prominence during the 1970s when philosophers, theorists, and academicians started using ethical theories and moral philosophy to address persistent problems of society. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that the discipline of philosophy came into contact with professionals in various other fields, like, medicine, law, business, engineering, scientists, designers and others. This interaction led to the generation of interest in professional ethics and related issues, leading to the development of fields such as medical ethics and business ethics.

Applied ethics derives its intellectual stimulus from moral philosophy and aims to provide solutions to emerging moral problems in society. For instance, there has been a history of civil rights, human rights and social rights movements. Many individuals in the fields of law, theology, political theory and professionals working in the fields of media, business, and engineering have addressed issues in applied ethics from time to time.

There is a wide array of topics that form the subject matter of Applied Ethics and these topics can be traced to ancient times; in every society individuals are affected with a wide range of concerns about individual liberty, social equality, injustice, abuse of the marginalised groups and other interrelated matters of justice, equality and parity. Philosophers have not only developed moral theories about right, good, virtue and other interrelated concepts, but they have simultaneously discussed moral problems as well. However, it should be noted that no major philosopher throughout the history of moral philosophy has developed a method of applied ethics. The concern of applied ethics is practical in nature rather than being merely theoretical. There has been a persistent gap in the theoretical and practical spheres as one fails to understand the application of the theory to generate public policy and resolve moral problems. Applied ethics deals with the real-world actions and their moral considerations in the areas of public and private life and others, like, health, relationships, law and more. It discusses issues such as abortion, protection of human and animal subjects in research, affirmative action, moral issues in the workplace, privacy, freedom of information, obligation

* For the purpose of definition, problem of moral content and methods of justification this unit has primarily referred to Tom L. Beauchamp’s article “The Nature of Applied Ethics.” It is advisable to refer to this article for a detailed exposition.

to future generations, intellectual property right, discrimination based on race and sex, environmental concerns, animal rights and others. Rajendra Prasad's paper "Applying Ethics: Modes, Motives and Levels of Commitment" discusses about logistics of applying ethical principles, the motivation their application requires as well as the levels of commitments involved in their application.

15.4 APPLIED ETHICS: DEFINITION

According to Gert applied ethics is defined as the systematic application of general ethical theories to particular moral problems (Gert, 1982, pp. 51-52). Whenever one is in the situation of a moral dilemma, application of ethical theories can pave the way for action. Moral Dilemmas are situations where an individual is faced with crucial questions, like, What ought I to do? What is the morally right thing to do? etc. Moral Dilemmas involve conflict in decision making in real (past and present) events or future possibilities, moral outcomes of drawing a certain legal document and other such situations. For example, in the issue of Euthanasia or mercy killing the pertinent dilemma faced by policy makers, medical practitioners, legal experts are, Whether one has the right to die with dignity? Whether the doctor has the moral obligation to respect patient's right to life? If the patient lacks the capacity to make a decision about their own life then who should be allowed to take a decision on their behalf? Whether there can be a duty to die? And such questions. Similarly, in Business Ethics there can be possible conflicts between the rights and the obligations of the consumer and the producer of goods, the conflicts related to the rights of the employer and employees also take various forms. In media ethics there is a conflict between the individual's right to privacy and the public right to get information; the consumer's right to information and provider's obligation to exercise restraint in the distribution of information. Other areas where similar conflicts appear are environmental ethics, legal ethics, computer ethics and several other spheres related to personal, professional, social, political, and economic lives of individuals. Eventually substantive, normative and metaethical considerations also tend to enter the domain of Applied Ethics.

The supporters of the definition presented by Gert believe that applied ethics implements either general moral norms or theories to resolve practical problems. Argument and analysis are considered the primary tools for examining moral problems. However, on close observation we gather that it is not possible to make practical judgments by appealing either to moral theories or principles. Instead, moral theories and moral principles must be

supplemented in some way by particular cases, like, right action, empirical data, organizational experience, and others. Traditionally, it is observed that general theories address speculative and conceptual philosophical problems which are disengaged from practice. The job of an ethical theorist therefore, has been to explain and justify morality in order to clarify moral concepts, examine moral judgements and arguments and to array basic principles of morals. Traditionally, their job is not to use normative theories in order to solve practical moral problems. As already discussed above there is always an implicit/explicit gap between theory and practice because it is always questionable how theory can be supplemented by practice. Therefore, it is argued that applied ethics “as the application of general ethical theories to particular moral problems” is a narrow definition which neither defines the appropriate method nor the content of applied ethics.

However, “a weaker and more defensible view is that “applied ethics” refers to any use of philosophical methods to treat moral problems, practices and policies in the government, professions, technology and the like” (Beauchamp, 2008, p. 3). But the limitation of this definition is that this use of philosophical methods neither commits one towards the role played by general theories nor to ‘problem solving’ as a goal. Few academicians even equate “applied ethics” with “professional ethics.” Professional Ethics comprises of rules followed by members of a profession to govern their own practice. Yet, there are many problems which extend beyond professional conduct but turn out to be potent issues of applied ethics, like, abortion, allocation of scarce medical resources, pornography, hate crimes, intergenerational justice, domestic abuse, child sex abuse and others; and this seriously limits the scope of this proposed definition.

These conceptual questions with regard to the nature of “applied ethics” show us that applied ethics is a difficult notion to define and therefore we should delve into a detailed understanding of both the content and the methods of applied ethics to get a fuller view of its domain of inquiry.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write short notes on the following topics:

- A. Morality
- B. Normative Ethics

2. Define Applied Ethics.

15.5 APPROACHES TO UNDERSTAND MORAL

As far as the appropriate sources of content in applied ethics are concerned, there are three influential answers quoted in the literature: an internal account, an external account and a mixed internal-external account. These are as follows:-

15.5.1 Internalism

The question which often comes to our mind is, Are there internal standards for professional and institutional morality? Internalism argues that ethics ought to be derived from professional-institutional and group ethos. Alasdair MacIntyre holds that in a “practice”, “goods internal to a practice” are achieved by engaging in the practice with a cooperative arrangement and conforming to its standards. Each and every profession traditionally has a set of standards which are internal to it. They determine what it means to be a good practitioner in that particular domain. However, traditional as well as professional standards do not guarantee that internal morality would be coherent and acceptable. On several occasions it is observed that internal standards are indefensibly rigid and authoritarian and therefore it is imperative that an internal morality should evolve with social changes. Beauchamp has agreed to Brody and Miller’s suggestion that there is an utmost need of reevaluation and reconstruction from time to time (Beauchamp, 2008, p. 4).

15.5.2 Externalism

Another question which often comes to our mind is, Are there external standards for professional and institutional morality? External morality incorporates norms that sustain and supplement norms of an internal morality. This concept maintains that precepts in settings of applied ethics rely upon and require justification by external standards such as those of public opinion, law, the common morality, religious ethics and philosophical ethics. Ethical theories provide the adequate basis for applied ethics. Over the years, law, religion and philosophical theories have served as sources of external morality. The benefit of a single ethical theory is that it provides a background and a framework which can help mitigate the dispute among conflicting parties. However, there are several questions that can be raised on Externalist account, viz. Which moral theory is morally authoritative over others? How a particular philosophical theory is used to criticise internal standards or address a difficult moral problem? Can informed individuals reject an authoritative theory? After developing a consensus that a particular ethical theory is appropriate for this task we should work constructively in the domain of practical and policy questions by progressively making the norms in the theory more specific (Beauchamp, 2008, p. 5). However, at present no such theory or a general consensus has emerged.

15.5.3 Mixed Internalism and Externalism

This approach incorporates the elements of both Internalism and Externalism. Different cultures and groups have different sets of moral commitments. On the one hand internal morality fixes moral standards by membership within a profession or group on the other hand external morality fixes moral standards owing to the external broader cultural community. If necessary, professions and institutions are expected to reform their practices so that the prevailing moral rules of the larger society will be honored in practice. These social standards will vary from society to society.

Although this account shows us the relation between external and internal moralities, it also has many weaknesses. When we emphasise diversity we overlook basic similarities and neglect the common moral goals that exist among people i.e. many professions share the same moral perspective and shared norms of professional practice. Also, the theory overstates the degree of shared agreement which makes a community cohesive as they are composed of subgroups with different moral points of view. Furthermore, the mixed internist-externalism

account precludes all kinds of cross-cultural and cross community judgements. This account is unable to explain, justify and criticize public policy and hence unable to apply ethics to our deepest social problems.

15.6 PROBLEMS OF METHOD AND JUSTIFICATION

There are several methods or models of justification in applied ethics. Let us discuss following three methods:

Top-down models

These models apply the pre-existing norms to new particular events/situations available in front of us. This model confirms the way in which virtually all persons learn to think morally: its method involves applying a general rule or principle to a case that falls under the rule. These models follow a deductive form in “applying” the rule. They take the following deductive form:

- (1) Every act of description A is obligatory;
- (2) Act B is of description A. Therefore;
- (3) Act B is obligatory.

This model/approach considers that a single principle can be used to decide the rightness/wrongness of actions. There are several problems with moral priority given to pre-existing moral laws. Many times, it is required that the application of the moral norms has to be preceded by making the norms themselves more specific. This should be done before a particular instance is brought under an all-encompassing principle. We should check previous precedents in order to give weight to rules, theories and principles. The important theories of normative ethics have already been discussed above; Utilitarianism believes an action is right if it maximises overall goodness, Kantian ethics accepts it to be right if it does not violate imperatives of rationality or respecting persons, Virtue theory adheres with what would be done by an ideal virtuous person in a morally dilemmatic situation.

Furthermore, these theories might not hold consistently for various reasons. No general norms might clearly be applicable in any particular circumstance as every situation is unique in itself. Therefore, moral norms applied on a particular event/situation may give inconclusive results. For example, if we look at Utilitarian justification we would realise that

many a times it might take certain things to be morally justified despite of the fact that maximum number of people might be wrong about what their happiness consists in. In the Top-Down model not only it is difficult to prove that some norms are self-justifying but there is also a possibility of infinite regress in the process of reasoning. Another variation in the top-down model is the pluralistic kind of ethical theories comprising of various moral principles on the lines of three already mentioned above. There are multiple principles on the basis of which rightness/wrongness of any given action, among the array of applied ethics issues, can be determined.

Bottom-up models

These models focus on the process of ‘how’ we make practical decisions rather than mere application of general principles and theories. The method emphasizes that our moral beliefs are structured and moral decisions are made on the one hand by using existing social agreements and practices, on the other hand by a thorough analysis of new, exemplary, comparative cases. Also, structuring of moral beliefs is done by drawing analogies from prior practice and several other learnings from the domain of experiences. This system focuses on the use of existing social agreements and practices, insight-producing, novel cases, and comparative case analysis as the starting-points for moral decision making. Bottom-up accounts navigate an array of methodologies, like, pluralism, casuistry, pragmatism, particularism among others. Many possible situations arise with conflicting interpretations, analogies and judgments. It is possible that a particular feature of a moral principle proves the rightness of an action in one case but may be counted against the rightness of the same action in another case. This opens up the possibility of moral particularism.

However, there are possibilities which indicate that the bottom-up models are prejudiced, biased, based on irrelevant analogies, hasty generalizations, popular opinions and other factors. Analogies and comparisons as method do not provide us any claim to objectivity. Another important challenge is that although these methods provide us with a tool of thought but these accounts present us a method without content as they lack in initial moral premises.

Coherentism

Instead of a top-down model or a bottom-up model, which are now regarded as insufficient, there is another version of models, known as “reflective equilibrium” or “coherence theory.” John Rawls has given an account of “reflective equilibrium” in his book *A Theory of Justice* (1971). When a system of ethics is developed, we should start with considering the broadest

possible set of moral judgements and make a provisional set of principles by reflecting upon them. “Reflective equilibrium views investigation in ethics (and theory construction) as a reflective testing of moral principles, theoretical postulates, and other relevant moral beliefs to make them as coherent as possible.” (Beauchamp, 2008, p. 11).

When we make considered judgements, we present moral beliefs without a bias and they are always ‘liable to revision.’ “Reflective equilibrium” aims to match and adjust considered judgements to maintain coherence with the premises of our most general moral commitments. We begin with an account of sound judgments of moral rightness and wrongness and then go on to construct a general account and a specific account that is consistent with paradigm judgements to render them coherent. After this we test the resultant actions to see if they offer us any incoherent results. Any incoherent results call for either readjustments, or giving them up, or renewing the process. This adjustment and pruning is a continuous process for a completely stable equilibrium is never possible (Rawls, 1971).

Let us take examples of two issues to understand the complexities, which are involved.

Case 1: If we look up the discourse on justification of universal human rights, we observe that foundationalists believe that human nature is homogenous. On the other hand, anti-foundationalists and relativists argue that the nature of human being entails humanness but this humanness takes different forms in different societies as cultural beliefs and practices vary accordingly. To consider only the homogeneous nature of human beings by ignoring the plurality in human society would render the argument incomplete. Looking from the perspective of coherentism neither a top-down model nor a bottom-up model can work to provide reasonable justification for the concept of universal human rights. Instead, we are required to develop an objective view and reconcile the differences between moral relativism and moral universalism.

Case 2: Surrogate motherhood is a result of relatively new technological advancements in the field of reproductive medicine that presents many personal, social, ethical, legal, and medical challenges. This is a complex practice with its risks and benefits. Even if it does not become commercially successful it has definitely given rise to multifaceted questions, like, what is our understanding of family? What is parenthood? Is parenthood determined by gestational connection or genetic connection? Is the rearing role of a mother more important than the gestational or genetic role? Moral arguments against surrogate motherhood include risking harm to the resulting children, risk to intended parents and surrogate mother and her family.

There are several arguments put forward for surrogate motherhood that reject all the arguments against surrogacy. They argue that there is no harm to the child, surrogate's family, labour disparity involved in legal agreements on surrogacy. The legalization of surrogacy would require consideration of a balanced point of view which would certainly depend on developing a coherent perspective. A balanced perspective should neither be dominated by the critics nor the supporters but it should reject their respective biases and develop a balanced perspective.

The process of achieving moral coherence does not come to an end or perfection. Any moral framework which is deemed adequate for applied ethics should not be seen as a finished product. Any applied ethical issue is always in need of continual adjustment by reflective equilibrium. The open-endedness of this model is visible in its never-ending search for coherence and for novel situations that challenge our current moral frameworks. One problem with Coherentism, however, is that achieving a coherence of norms can never provide a ground for justification because the body of substantive judgments and principles which cohere might not be absolutely satisfactory. We start with considered judgements which are morally justified. However, at times even the considered judgements might not turn out to be reliable themselves. The reason is that the persons, codes or institutions on the basis of which these considered judgments have been made might not themselves be very reliable. Also, there is no clarity as to what is the precise nature and scope of the method, because a philosopher who seeks coherence might be pursuing one or more of several different interests, like, evaluating public policy, improving his or her personal set of beliefs etc. It would be apt for reasons mentioned above that although applied ethics stimulates moral imagination but applied-theoretical distinction needs to be viewed with caution (Beauchamp, 1984 and Gert, 1984).

15.7 ANALYSIS

In order to understand the ethical theories and their implications in a better way it is useful to consider theories in relation to practical issues. Each and every issue can be addressed from the point of view of different ethical theories. General theories should definitely be contextualised in the given situation, or else moral guidelines would be empty and ineffective. At times there might be a need to specify what is meant by a broader/ vague definition of a term for a context. At the same time narrowing the scope of general norms can

also lead to moral disagreements. Disagreements can be about the scope, concepts, facts, genuine moral dilemma, or even about which norms and circumstances are relevant. Parties may disagree on several dilemmatic situations like whether euthanasia is acceptable, whether affirmative action is appropriate, whether capital punishment is morally tenable and other such contentious decisions. The changing circumstances of urbanisation, education, industrialisation, etc. in the global world order show a continuous need to reassess our moral position (Beauchamp, 2008, 12-13).

A foundational question can be raised with regard to whether applied ethics has a special moral content and distinct method of justification. Applied ethicists analyze concepts, examine the hidden presuppositions of moral opinions and theories, offer criticism and constructive accounts of the moral phenomena. They try to stimulate the moral imagination, promote analytical skills, and weed out prejudice, emotion, misappropriated data, hegemony of ideas, authoritativeness, and the like. Differences between ethical theory and applied ethics are as apparent over content as over method. Instead of analyzing moral theories and general terms such as "good", "rationality", "ideals", and "virtues", applied ethicists analyse confidentiality, environmental responsibility, rights, various issues in medical ethics, like, euthanasia, abortion, organ transplantation, surrogacy, confidentiality between doctor-patient, among others. Moreover, applied ethics studies a variety of content, and the working knowledge of the field requires considerable empirical knowledge related to historical context, economical situation, policies and others.

Principles in ethical theory are typically general guidelines that leave considerable room for judgment in specific cases, but applied ethics should advance concrete action guidelines that instruct human beings to act in ways that allow for less interpretation and discretion. Many scholars are suspicious about the fact that whether ethical theory can play any role in case analysis or policy? Do philosophical theories have any practical use? While no one might doubt the importance of the subject, many people do not understand the nature of the subject. However, before moving on to applied ethics it is always advisable to attain conceptual clarity in and through understanding the relations in a contextual setting. It serves the purpose of providing direction, guidance to human action. In the process of fulfilling this purpose, we test moral principles in the context of real life. In the process of applying ethical principles, we open the sphere to question, deliberate, criticize and revise these questions.

However, many times, there is a considered worry about the status of applied ethics as it is quite unclear which method or methodology can be used for justifying any given practice.

15.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the relevance of applied ethics as a discipline. Applied ethics deals with practical normative challenges faced in our everyday interactions. In this sense it can also be referred to as ‘do-it-yourself’ exercise. Unlike traditional ethical theories which are concerned with purely theoretical problems, like, criteria of rightness, concept of right and wrong etc applied ethics is devoted to the treatment of moral problems, practices and policies in personal and professional life in the fields as diverse as technology, reproduction, governance etc. In the contemporary world various fields of applied ethics are studied as independent spheres; Business ethics, Bioethics, Professional Ethics, Social Ethics, Environmental Ethics, Distributive Justice and Human Rights among others. To sum it up, it is important to deliberate on theoretical approaches to strike a balanced viewpoint with respect to justification of their position. The unit discusses and presents an analysis of issues of moral content, method, and justification in the domain of applied ethics.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss the problem of moral content with reference to three models discussed by Tom L. Beauchamp in “The Nature of Applied Ethics.”

2. Elucidate Coherentism as a method of justification.

15.9 KEY WORDS

Applied Ethics: Applied ethics is referred to as a component study of a wider sub-discipline of ethics. As a subfield of ethics, it focuses on issues of practical concern. It is concerned with ethical issues in various fields of human life, encompassing personal and professional space –including social, economical, political, and other domains.

Coherentism: There are several methods and models of justification in applied ethics. Unlike top-down model and bottoms-up models as methods of justification, coherentism provides a balanced approach to understand the multi-faceted field of applied ethics.

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15.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR

Check your Progress I

1. **A. Morality:** Morality derives its origin in the Latin word *moralis*. Stands for standards or principles derived from a code of conduct of a particular philosophy, religion or culture, or from a standard that someone believes should be universal. Morality is also seen as synonymous with "goodness" or "rightness". Morality in a descriptive sense incorporates the ‘social mores’, ‘codes of conduct’, and ‘cultural or personal values’.

B. Normative Ethics: Normative ethics studies the systematic construction of a valid ethical system. The purpose of normative ethics is to discover or construct a consistent system of moral norms that stands valid for everyone. Three main kinds of normative ethical theories are Immanuel Kant’s Deontology, J.S. Mill’s Consequentialism, which is Utilitarianism and Aristotle’s Virtue Ethics.

2. Applied ethics is a branch of philosophy whose subject matter is the application of moral rules, principles, or concepts to real life issues like, Euthanasia, abortion, surrogacy, and several others. The term “applied ethics” or “practical ethics” has recent origins as it gained prominence during the 1970s when philosophers, theorists, and academicians started using ethical theories and moral philosophy to address persistent problems of society. The emergence of professional ethics, medical ethics, bio ethics and business ethics is attributed to this interaction. According to Gert applied ethics is defined as the systematic application of

general ethical theories to particular moral problems. Whenever one is in a moral dilemma we require to apply ethical theories. Conflicts appear in the areas of Business Ethics, Euthanasia, environmental ethics, legal ethics, computer ethics and several other spheres related to personal, professional, social, political, and economic lives of individuals. Moral theories and moral principles must be supplemented in some way by particular cases, like, right action, empirical data, organizational experience, and others. An implicit/explicit gap has been observed between theory and practice. Applied ethicists try to mitigate this gap.

Check your Progress II

1. As far as the appropriate sources of content in applied ethics are concerned, there are three influential answers quoted in the literature: an internal account, an external account and a mixed internal-external account. Let us discuss them:

- A. **Internalism:** Internalism argues that ethics ought to be derived from professional or institutional or group ethos. Each and every profession traditionally has a set of standards which are internally determined.
- B. **Externalism:** External morality incorporates norms that sustain and supplement norms of an internal morality. This concept maintains that precepts in settings of applied ethics rely upon and require justification by external standards such as those of public opinion, law, the common morality, religious ethics and philosophical ethics.
- C. **Mixed Internalism and Externalism:** This approach incorporates the elements of both Internalism and Externalism. On the one hand internal morality fixes moral standards by membership within a profession or group on the other hand external morality fixes moral standards owing to the external broader cultural community. In focusing on diversity we overlook basic similarities and neglect the common moral goals that exist among people.

2. There are several methods or models of justification in applied ethics. Instead of top-down models or bottom-up models, which are now regarded as insufficient, there is another version of models, known as “reflective equilibrium” or “coherence theory.” John Rawls has given an account of “reflective equilibrium.” When a system of ethics is developed, we should start with considering the broadest possible set of moral judgements and make a provisional set of principles by reflecting upon them. The process of achieving moral coherence does not come to an end or perfection. Any moral framework which is deemed adequate for applied ethics

should not be seen as a finished product. They are always in need of continual adjustment by reflective equilibrium.

We take examples of two relevant issues. Let us discuss the moral issue of obligation towards respecting the environment including animals. The treatment of non-human animals hinges on the question, what is the moral status of animals? Should animals be granted rights? Do human beings have obligations towards animals? On the same lines there are specific questions with relation to environment, like, What is the status of environment independent of human existence? Whether the environment has any value in case human beings do not exist? Does environment matter without any sentient beings? Can nature be used as a means or should it be treated as an end-in-itself? Coherentialism as a method helps us to articulate a balanced view point regarding our obligations towards environment and animals.

UNIT 16 BIOETHICS*

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Key issues in Bioethics
- 16.3 History of Bioethics
- 16.4 Medical Ethics
- 16.5 Euthanasia
- 16.6 Abortion
- 16.7 Doctor-Patient Relation
- 16.8 Informed Consent
- 16.9 Autonomy of the Patient
- 16.10 Animal Rights
- 16.11 Let us Sum Up
- 16.12 Key Words
- 16.13 Further Readings and References
- 16.14 Answers to check your progress

16.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the unit are,

- To understand the fundamental concept of Bioethics and its core issues.

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- To analyse ethical conflicts arising out of advancements in the field of medical technology and contemporary challenges, arising due to the relationship between humans and the environment.
- To critically evaluate these issues from an ethical point of view.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will explore the whole sphere of Bioethics. It will map the most pressing ethical issues that engulf the contemporary world. We will critically evaluate the present day scenarios that involve ethical interventions, such as, doctor-patient relationship, consent and informed consent, abortion, euthanasia and animal rights. These are mere indications of a wide array of issues in Bioethics. It is hard to cover all the issues here, but it will help us to explore the key aspects of the subject.

16.2 KEY ISSUES IN BIOETHICS

The reverence for human life is a value that has a special, deep seated place, in all people. This leads to certain concerns regarding issues such as abortion and euthanasia. It is hard to fathom that can any ethics or any principle justify the killing of humans or unborn children?

Abortion is understood as the termination of pregnancy in medical terminology. The central question that revolves around this practice is that given the fact that fetuses are human, is it justifiable to kill a human being?

Euthanasia is, etymologically ‘good death’. We, as humans, also generally believe that it is wrong to kill someone even if it is ‘mercy killing’. Sometimes it is termed as ‘physician assisted suicide’, when a doctor intentionally assists the patient in the act of killing himself/herself. The fundamental principle that challenges the act is the principle of - sanctity of life. According to this principle, life is sacrosanct per se. This raises some serious ethical issues, such as--is there a right to die?

Do animal have rights? This is another pivotal bioethical issue that calls for serious reflection. Should their suffering or pain be taken into moral consideration in terms of experimentation and development of medicines? Is this justified or not?

There is another important issue that requires bioethical reflection. This is the issue of '**doctor-patient relationship**'. To set the stage, the patient is the vulnerable part of the play, which is the lay person at the receiving end. The doctor stands as the expert, and dominant party. This relation could be also understood in terms of the receiver and the provider. Here we will explore the ethical dimensions of this relationship, and what are the ethical dimensions associated with this issue.

A closely related concept to doctor-patient relationship is the concept of '**consent and informed consent**'. Every patient has a right to know about his or her treatment, disease, side effects etc. It is the duty of the doctor to ensure that the patient is aware of, and is satisfied with the line of treatment. Any kind of negligence or ignorance in this process calls for ethical review, as it jeopardises the autonomy of the patient.

16.3 HISTORY OF BIOETHICS

The term bioethics and medical ethics are sometimes used interchangeably. However, it must be noted that bioethics has a much broader scope than medical ethics. Bioethics is a recently developed multidisciplinary field of learning that encompasses issues in healthcare, research, biotechnology, environment along with the traditional elements of medical ethics.

It is essential to acknowledge that the development of this new field of study is particularly associated with the boom in biomedical development, field of medicine, technological advancement in organ transplant, dialysis etc. Moreover, there were certain events in history that paved the way for some serious deliberations and reflections from scientists, philosophers, policy makers and other health care providers.

Two major incidents led to a reevaluation of the existing health care practices around the world. The World War II Nazi medical experiments in Europe and the unethical Tuskegee research in the United States led to the states around the world to come out of their dogmatic slumbers.

The Nazi human experimentation was a series of medical experiments on large number of prisoners, including children, by Nazi Germany at its concentration camps in the mid 1940's. Nazi physicians forced the prisoners against their will to participate in the research. The prisoners had no clue as to what they were being experimented for. Most of the victims died during the experimentation. The survivors suffered some irreversible physical damage and

psychological trauma. Post World War-II, 1947, trials of Nazi doctors who conducted the heinous medical experiments were executed. These trials came to be known as the “Doctors Trial”. The verdict revolved around the difficult question of medical experimentation on human beings and proposed a revised code of conduct in a section entitled, “Permissible Medical Experiments”. The ten points of the revised document came to be known as the “Nuremberg Code”. It is apt to note here, before these trials there was no international law to differentiate between legal and illegal human experimentation.

In 1932, African American men from Alabama were enlisted to participate in a scientific experiment on Syphilis. The Tuskegee study of untreated Syphilis in the Negro male was conducted by the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). The goal was to observe the natural history of untreated Syphilis in black population. The subjects were kept in the dark and were not informed about the nature of the experiment. Unfortunately, they received no treatment at all. Even after the discovery of penicillin, the cure for Syphilis, they were not given the treatment and were left to die. However, the research continued for 40 years uninterrupted. Much later, the study was exposed and ethical issues were raised. This was followed by an enquiry on such incidents and certain amendments and rules were laid for research on humans. This was presented as the Belmont Report.

The term ‘Bioethics’ was coined in 1927 by Fritz Jahr in the article about “bioethical imperative” regarding the use of animals and plants in scientific research. However, in 1970, the American biochemist Van Rensselaer Potter proposed the term bioethics as ethics for a “science of survival”. The terminology never became widely established, however, the term Bioethics came to refer to a growing interest in the ethical issues arising for healthcare and biomedical sciences.

Bioethics in its very inception remains an interdisciplinary field. Various breakthrough researches in the field of medicine, nursing, biomedical technology, and human sciences have shaped and framed its structure from time to time. Breakthrough developments in medicine and technology such as, organ transplant, dialysis machine, artificial ventilators, in vitro fertilization, have led to a sea change in the world outlook. All these have had a deep impact in the ethical reflections of people around the world. These developments have made possible to increase the lifespan of people, and also created hope for childless couples to conceive, however they also raise a series of issues and dilemmas for ethical consideration. Therefore,

such bold transformations call for some thoughtful reflection on the application of such advancements.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. State the key issues in bioethics.

2. Discuss in brief the two major incidents that led to the formation of international law on human experimentation?

16.4 MEDICAL

Medical ethics is regarding ethical and moral issues related to the practice of medicine and health care. Medical profession is constantly engaged with new developments in modern medicine, technology. An important element that strengthens the scaffolding is the element of empathy and compassion towards the patient. Provision for optimum medical care is a pivotal step in patient management. This call for understanding of a patient's needs, behaviour, rights of the patient, cultural background and professional accountability. Having a good ethical conduct nurtures trust and faith for the health care provider and patient's response to the treatment also yields better results.

The significance of ethics in medical care can be traced back to ancient times. It dates back to 1750 BCE, the code of Hammurabi in Babylonia is recorded as the oldest text that states the professional expectations of the medical practitioners. In India, one may refer to Ayurveda that describes the attribute of a good doctor in the Samhita of Athreya, Charaka and Sushruta around 300 BCE-500 CE. This may equally apply to other Unani, Arabic and Chinese medical practices.

We now come to the teachings of Hippocrates that greatly influenced medical ethics and continues to do so. Hippocrates is called the father of medical ethics and the founder of the famous “Hippocratic Oath”. The Oath is commonly assumed to be of 5th century BC and is regarded as the foundation of western medical ethics. Around 500 BC many different schools of medical practice coexisted. Mostly, all of them reflected different religious, philosophical and medical beliefs. The Hippocratic School produced a large body of writings on medicine, science and ethics. In the present times, most graduating medical school students swear to the *Hippocratic oath* (modernised version).

Some of the key points are as under:

- To have a parental like respect to the one who has taught the art and to continue this regard, as his brother, to his offspring
- To do no harm.
- Whatever I see or hear in the lives of my patient, I will keep it secret.

The key controversial aspects of the Hippocratic Oath are its precepts against Euthanasia, Abortion and surgery. All these have been abrogated in later versions. Maintaining confidentiality with the patient indeed remains a strong precept even in the present times. However, there are some sweeping changes in the present version. Over the centuries, nevertheless some of the key components, such as “do no harm” and “patient’s confidentiality” are still intact.

On the basis of Hippocratic Oath, four basic principles of biomedical ethics were described by Tom Beauchamp and James Childress in 1979. The four principles are non- hierarchical and are applied to reflect ethical issues in biomedical ethics.

1. Principle of beneficence

2. Principle of non- maleficence
3. Principle of respect for autonomy
4. Principle of justice

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the scope of medical ethics? Explain its nature.

2. Discuss the importance of the Hippocratic school in the history of biomedical ethics.

16.5 EUTHANASIA

In bioethics, the end of life issues often come under the issues of Euthanasia. It comes from the Greek word, “eu”, meaning “good”, and “thanatos”, meaning “death”. It is sometimes referred to as good death. It includes the issues of right to die, and physician assisted suicide. In most of the cases, euthanasia involves a deliberate action carried by someone else, usually a medical practitioner, to bring about the death of a person. In this form euthanasia is understood as “mercy killing”. Oxford dictionary describes Euthanasia as “a gentle and easy death especially in case of irrevocable and irreversible painful disease”.

16.5.1 Types of Euthanasia

1. Voluntary Euthanasia

It is a situation where the patient is conscious and is able to make a rational decision, to end his/her life. In some cases, the patient may have his living will, as a form of consent to terminate his/her life, if at all he/she is infected by an irreversible disease. The request may be of the nature to withhold treatment that would prolong one's suffering.

2. Involuntary Euthanasia

It is a situation where the patient has not given his or her consent and euthanasia is administered against his/her will.

3. Non Voluntary Euthanasia

It is a term which is used when the patient is not in a position to convey his wishes about ending his life. Here the patient's wishes are not known and thus it is usually a caretaker or a family member who may be consulted to make the decision. These are the cases not really against the will of the person, as his wishes are not known. In such cases, a person may be in a coma, brain damaged or a neonate.

4. Active Euthanasia

It is sometimes referred to as 'killing'. Here some steps are taken to assist in one's death, for instance, by injecting a lethal injection. The point here is to make death painless as much as possible.

5. Passive Euthanasia

It is referred to as "letting die". In this case, there is no action or "negative" action undertaken consciously to let someone die. In other words, the health care professional deliberately withholds the treatment, to let the patient die through the natural course of the illness.

The central question in Biomedical ethics revolves around legalizing euthanasia. Whether it should be legalised or not? There are strong arguments from both the segments of people, for or against euthanasia. Those who are against it, argue from the perspective of the "sanctity of life" principle. For them life is sacred per se. Further, they argue by upholding the codes of medical ethics; principle of beneficence and nonmaleficence. These codes are binding on doctors, to do no harm to their patient and preserve their life. Moreover, there remains a fear

that by allowing euthanasia may lead to devaluation of human life. It may take the form of a slippery slope to stigmatize and abuse chronically ill patients. On the other side are those who believe that it should be the right of an individual to decide when to end life. They argue for the inclusion of “right to die” as an extension to “right to life”. The right to life with dignity is the threshold of the entire debate. Merely by being alive in a vegetative state is contrary to the very essence of “life with dignity”. The supporters are of the opinion that biological existence without any quality of life is contrary to having a good life. If the person is suffering and cannot perform his basic biological functions himself/herself, illness is untreatable, irreversible, then merely prolonging the life is outrightly unacceptable to the principles of medical ethics.

These are some strong debates from both the segments. As we have observed, such issues are conflicting and overlapping and hence leads to ethical dilemmas.

16.5.2 Case Study

“Aruna Shanbaug was an Indian nurse who was at the centre of attention in a court case on euthanasia after spending nearly 42 years in a vegetative state as a result of sexual assault. In 1973, while working as a junior nurse at King Edward Memorial Hospital, Parel, Mumbai, Shanbaug was sexually assaulted by a ward boy, and remained in a vegetative state following the assault. On 24 January 2011, after Shanbaug had been in this state for 37 years, the Supreme Court of India responded to a plea for euthanasia filed by journalist Pinki Virani, setting up a medical panel to examine her. The court rejected the petition on 7 March 2011. However, in its landmark opinion, it allowed passive euthanasia in India. Shanbaug died of pneumonia on 18th May, 2015, after being in a persistent vegetative state for nearly 42 years.”

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aruna_Shanbaug_case)

It is to be noted that this case revived the debate on euthanasia in India. It led to some changes in the existing legislation and as a result, passive euthanasia was legalised for exceptional cases only. It could be allowed in extreme cases on the request of the family and doctors, considering the best interest of the patient. While active euthanasia still stands illegal, passive euthanasia requires to be administered cautiously in order to avoid any abuse of this law.

16.6 ABORTION

Abortion in the present context means the “termination of pregnancy” especially that of a human foetus. In medical history there are several cases where the foetuses are not viable and may die but not with someone’s assistance. Here, we are concerned with those cases where a conscious decision is taken to undergo abortion. In bioethics, the pressing debate revolves around the issue whether it is ethical or unethical to indulge in such an act.

An ethical proposition that surrounds this issue is to perceive life as sacred in itself. Alongside are various other markers that questions the ethical standing of this act, such as-

1. Concern for the welfare of the child.
2. Concern for the life and autonomy of the mother.
3. Concern for the future of society.

Those who support abortion provide pro-choice arguments in favour of the woman’s rights to choose. The emphasis is on the autonomy and personal rights of the woman. On the other end, those who believe that abortion is inherently immoral, and are against its application at any stage of pregnancy are pro-life groups. The main contesting issue is with regard to the moral status of the unborn foetus, and to consider whether the unborn foetus has a right to life or not?

Given the advancement in treatments and medicine, it is now safe to undergo abortion, however the ethical considerations remain.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss in brief the types of euthanasia.

2. What are the biomedical issues concerning Abortion?

16.7 DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATION

The doctor- patient relation is a unique blend of trust that is essential for medical care. The patient is expected to have complete trust in the ability of the doctor. In reciprocation, the doctor is expected to give the best care possible to the patient and keep him/her informed of the treatment. The element of transparency is pivotal for the success of this relationship.

1. Trust and Confidentiality

Trust is an essential element in this relationship. All important information regarding the diagnosis, prognosis and further treatment must be explained to the patient. At the same time, the patient is expected to put his/her trust in the doctor and must reciprocate.

2. Physical Contact

Physical contact is a necessary element in doctor-patient relations. It calls for physical examination of the patient's body for carrying out treatment and diagnosis. The patient must trust the doctor and the doctor is expected to respect the body of the patient to whom he/she is treating. Maintaining privacy and confidentiality in the treatment is pivotal.

3. Concept of Respect

Seeing a patient as a person rather than a mere body is essential. Irrespective of the fact, whether the patient is a child, adult, mentally disabled or physically deformed, the doctor must treat them with human lens.

Doctor-patient relation has its own ethical challenges. Respect for the patient's autonomy is a related concept that is of utmost importance. However, many times, doctors are faced with

dilemmatic situations where they are forced to violate this principle. In cases where there is a need to break the bad news, sometimes the family members of the patient may request the doctor to withhold the truth. One such exception is *therapeutic privilege*. “According to this idea, a health-care practitioner may withhold information that would otherwise have to be disclosed if it is judged that disclosure would be likely to lead to harm to the patient”

This challenges the very foundation of trust of this relation. However, the doctor is expected to look through the lens of social situation and beliefs as well.

16.8 INFORMED CONSENT

An important factor related to doctor-patient relationship is the concept of informed consent. It is a formal procedure whereby a patient’s consent is taken before carrying forward the treatment or any surgical procedure. Every patient has a right to be aware of and at the same time be a stakeholder in the entire process of his/her treatment. In the light of this, informed consent is a value oriented concept that revolves around the principle of autonomy of the patient.

It is a right of every patient to be fully apprised of his/her illness, diagnosis, prognosis, alternate treatment and what are the potential risks involved. It is the duty of the doctor to explain in detail to the patient about his/her condition and the mode of treatment that he/she has planned for the patient. The doctor must present the facts truly to the patient regarding the post-operative prognosis and the quality of life after it.

Further it is advisable that the doctor must be able to communicate effectively with the patient, keeping at bay any medical jargon as far as possible. The communication must be in simple language that is easily comprehensible to the patient.

Here it is pertinent to distinguish between “informed consent” and “understood consent”. In case of informed consent a patient is merely informed about the treatment, its prognosis, risks and implications. On the other hand, understood consent is used when the doctor is convinced that the patient has fully understood the line of treatment and risks involved in it. The difference between the two is a matter of semantics. Doctor or a health care provider must be sensitive to the use of vocabulary and language, so as to make the patient comprehend it easily. Consent from the patient is usually taken in the form of a written consent.

16.9 AUTONOMY OF THE PATIENT

A patient's autonomy is to be valued and respected. Under no circumstances it should be compromised. The patient is free to either accept the treatment proposed by the doctor, to look for an alternative procedure or to completely call off the treatment. He/she has a free choice and violation of it may have some legal repercussions.

It is within this parameter that bioethical issues arise. Valid consent is when the patient gives his/her consent willingly for the implementation of the treatment. Patient's wish is pivotal here and so his autonomy is to be preserved and prioritised.

However, there are certain scenarios under which it becomes absolutely difficult to get a valid consent from the patient. This may be due to the limitation on the decision making capacity of the patient. Such patients may have some physical or mental conditions, due to which they would need someone else to make decisions on their behalf.

It comes to the doctor to take care of such vulnerable patients and ensure that any decision taken should be in the best interest of the patient. Usually these decisions are to be taken by his/her parents, guardians or other family members. They are called surrogate decision-makers. If there happens to be no family members of the patient, then the impetus falls on the treating doctor to take such calls on behalf of the patient. Such decisions require a careful examination of the patient's treatment and to make the best possible decision.

16.10 ANIMAL RIGHTS

The other bioethical issue that is significant to this topic is regarding the rights of animals in comparison to human rights. For some it is hard to comprehend that animals have rights. There are differences between humans and animals but does that mean that we can outrightly deny them any moral consideration?

Not Conscious Hence No Rights

Some thinkers are of the opinion that since animals lack consciousness, there is no question of them having rights. Modern western philosopher Rene Descartes famously argued that animals are like machines. They are driven by passion but are devoid of any consciousness. It implies that animals certainly lack the ability to suffer. Peter Singer, the most prominent

thinker, argues that there is no rationality in discriminating against animals just because they are different or belong to different species. Singer argues that animals do suffer, and it is our moral duty to protect their interest. He uses the term “speciesism” to rebuke any argument that justifies exploitation of animals on the ground that they belong to different species.

Experimentation on Animals

Animals have been used for experimentations and research for discoveries and testing of various drugs. The main issue in bioethics is concerning the issue of justification of using animals for testing. Those who argue in favour of this view render animals as less valuable than human beings. According to them, it is justifiable to use them for some human good as they are not worthy of anything valuable. The enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant stated that the concept of morality cannot be extended to animals. His categorical imperative only applied to rational human beings and not to animals. He was of the opinion, since animals do not have any duties, they have no moral obligations. Animals stand outside the domain of morality.

Those who argue against animal experimentation strongly put forward their belief that animals suffer pain. The limitation is that we do not understand their language and hence we feel that they do not feel pain. Further, many of the experiments are non-essential and thus could be avoided to be tested on animals.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the distinction between ‘informed consent’ and ‘understood consent’?

2. Discuss in brief the issues concerning animal rights in bioethics.

16.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to understand the subject matter of Bioethics. We have critically analysed the central debates and ethical issues that surround it. Being a multidisciplinary subject, it is ever evolving and presents issues from varied perspectives. It is important to view contemporary issues from an ethical lens. With the advancement in medicine, technology and other fields, bioethical issues must not be compromised and should be viewed with ethical reflection. It is to be noted that medical ethics is a part of bioethics and includes some key principles that acts as tools for reflecting upon any ethical issue. Concepts of euthanasia, abortion, doctor- patient relation, informed consent and animal rights are some of the contemporary issues in bioethics. They reflect some key debates and ethical dilemmas of bioethics.

16.12 KEY WORDS

Abortion: Medical process of ending a pregnancy.

Bioethics: Is the study of ethical, social and legal issues that arise in biomedical research.

Dilemmas: A situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives.

Euthanasia: It refers to good death.

Speciesism: Having a biased view based on species.

16.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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16.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. The reverence for human life is a value that has a special, deep seated place, in all people. This leads to our concern regarding certain actions that need to be seen through an ethical lens. These are the issues concerning abortion, euthanasia, animal rights, consent and doctor-patient relation.
2. Two major incidents led to a reevaluation of the existing health care practices around the world. The World War II Nazi medical experiments in Europe and the unethical Tuskegee research in the United States. Both the incidents are prime examples of trespassing the ethical norms and violation of the principle of consent.

Check Your Progress II

1. Medical ethics is a branch of ethics that deals with the moral issues related to medicine and research in health care. Medical profession is constantly engaged with new breakthroughs in medicine, technology and research. Biomedical ethics critically evaluates such actions and developments through ethical perspective.
2. Hippocratic school is called in the name of its founder Hippocrates. He was a philosopher and the founder of the famous "Hippocratic Oath". In the present times, most graduating medical school students swear to the Hippocratic oath. The famous guideline of this oath is, "to do no harm".

Check Your Progress III

1. There are five types of euthanasia:

1. Active euthanasia: It is the immediate ending of the patient's life, on its request by administering a lethal injection to the patient.
2. Passive euthanasia: It is the withdrawal of the life support system, on the request of the patient. This prolongs the dying process and is often very painful.
3. Voluntary euthanasia: It is the case when the patient expresses his/her wish to end his/her life. Here the patient has the capacity to make such decisions for him/herself.
4. Involuntary euthanasia: It is the case where the patient's wishes are not taken into consideration and the act of euthanasia is committed without his/her consent.
5. Non-voluntary euthanasia: It is a case where the patient is medically unfit (comatose patients) to make end of life decisions about him/herself. In such scenarios, a close family member, or a guardian usually takes the decision, on behalf of the patient.
6. The central debate in bioethics regarding abortion is concerning the moral status of the fetus. If the fetus is a person, then the ethical question arises that are we justified to kill an unwanted child? On the other hand is the question concerning women's autonomy and right to choose. Since it is a matter of their bodies, they should get the right to make decisions about themselves.

Check Your Progress IV

1. Informed consent is when the patient is merely informed about his/her diagnosis. It is a mere cursory procedure. The patient has a right to know the line of treatment and the potential risks involved in it. It is the job of the health care provider to inform the patient and get his/her approval to continue with the course of the treatment. In case of 'understood consent' the patient is fully apprised of the line of treatment and what are the risks involved. The important point here is that the doctor makes sure that the patient has understood it. It takes into consideration different levels of understanding of each patient and to regulate one's use of vocabulary accordingly.
2. Use of animals for experimentation is the main issue of concern in bioethics. The debate surrounds various ethical concerns regarding animals. One position is that animals are conscious beings and thus have rights. They press upon the fact that animals do suffer and they feel pain. On the other end, it is argued that it is justifiable to use them for some human good as they are not worthy of anything valuable. Animals are outside the domain of morality as they don't have any duties.

UNIT 17 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS*

Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 What Matters?
- 17.3 Anthropocentric Ethics
- 17.4 Animal-centred Ethics
- 17.5 Biocentric Ethics
- 17.6 Ecocentric Ethics
- 17.7 Climate Change
- 17.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.9 Key Words
- 17.10 Further Readings and References
- 17.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

17.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are,

- to develop an understanding of issues in environmental ethics,
- to make the learners conversant with the various approaches to environmental ethics,
- to make the learners appreciate the gravity of the issue of climate change in current times.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

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The state of the environment is not good. We are witness today to severe environmental destruction, loss of biodiversity and devastating pollution. Species are dying out. Climate change is more and more visible: be it in previously unheard-of high temperatures, extreme rainfall, cyclones or drought. If we open any newspaper we are inundated with the effects of weather-related calamities: lives are lost, homes are ruined and diseases have broken out. We realize today that the resources nature provides us are not endless. The forests where we cut trees are now bare; cities are running out of water as rivers dry out; fish in many seas and oceans are reduced due to overfishing and lack of sustainable practices. There is widespread awareness that something needs to be done to address these vital matters. But are we morally obliged to act in response to them?

Environmental ethics, as a branch of ethics and under the rubric of philosophy, arose in the 1970s precisely with the dawning realization that nature was valuable and its bounties were limited and that to act in a way that respected and protected the environment could be considered legitimate moral behaviour. Environmental ethics is now an important discipline and is widely taught in many philosophy departments all over the world. It may be defined as a form of applied ethics that determines the rightness and wrongness of actions directed towards nature.

Environmental ethics seeks to find principles and concepts, formulae and norms in order to determine the morality of actions concerning nature. In other words, it seeks a way to answer moral questions that arise in situations to do with nature. Moral questions in general, though intangible, are of crucial importance to decision-making. For instance, a person may wish for euthanasia to relieve her of unbearable pain and suffering. This could lead to a discussion about the nature of the patient's disease or about the type of medication to be administered, if euthanasia is permitted, that may put the patient out of her misery but the moral question would be about the rightness or wrongness of the act of euthanasia itself and what it means for the patient to die in this way. Similarly in capital punishment, there could be questions of the cost of the process and the method of ending life to be adopted but an applied ethicist would look deeper into questions of fairness, the nature and extent of punishment and other similar considerations. An environmental ethics is similarly structured. Should trees be cut down for very valid economic reasons? Should animals be hunted as a source of entertainment? Should mines be dug for rare precious stones? Each of these actions, if undertaken, would lead to some environmental changes. But to an ethicist these actions raise

moral questions as well such as, for instance, how trees and animals are to be valued; an ethicist would look deeper to determine conceptions of good or bad that ought eventually to guide final decisions. This is what an environmental ethicist is challenged with and she must seek ethical ways and means for fulfilling this undertaking.

Environmental situations often also present choices. There are several ways of tackling an issue, of addressing a situation, and reasons ought to be found why one way is to be preferred over others. Discussed below are some examples:

In a remote forest, due to a dwindling predator population, the deer are prospering. However, as the number of deer increase, they appear to eat more and more grasses and plants leaving little for other animals, thus endangering the lives of the latter. Ought some external measures for limiting the deer population be put in place to safeguard others animals? Or ought nature be allowed to take its course?

A scientist creates a vehicle that can propel itself without petroleum and related products. However, it is very expensive to buy and it takes some effort to drive. My older diesel vehicle is very polluting. But it runs smoothly and easily and is cost effective. Ought I to continue driving my older vehicle or replace it?

Discussed above are two hypothetical situations. In each of these situations one is faced with a choice. How can one decide? Environmental ethicists are very aware of such situations as well. In order to address questions to do with identifying the right and wrong in environmental situations and deciding what choices to make environmental ethicists have found reasons and developed theories, some of which will be examined in the discussion given below.

17.2 WHAT MATTERS?

One way commonly adopted by ethicists for determining how to answer the above questions is by knowing what matters or what can be designated as a moral end. When an entity is seen as a moral end, moral behaviour can be extended to it. This means that its existence and wellbeing counts, and therefore only those actions that contribute to it positively are right actions. This implies that actions that harm the entity are wrong. Deciding what matters or what entity is a moral end however is not a random or arbitrary choice but rather a matter of

sound reasoning. A criterion or standard or reason must be identified and the entity in question must meet it to qualify as a moral end.

Generally, and most commonly four types of natural entities get highlighted by environmental ethicists with each adding to an ever-widening circle of what matters: human beings, animals, all living entities including trees and plants and finally, geographical features including mountains and rivers and collectives such as ecosystems. Correspondingly, the ethics are called anthropocentric, animal-centric, biocentric and ecocentric respectively. These and what they entail will be examined in the next few sections in detail.

The entities recognized as moral ends can also be considered as possessors of value. Value has come to be understood as of two types in environmental literature. An entity can be an end in itself and be valued for its own sake. This kind of value is referred to as intrinsic value and has been referred to above. My parents or my children, for instance, have intrinsic value. That is, they have worth no matter how they contribute to my life. Entities can also be valued as means to some other end as paracetamol is considered a means of reducing fever and restoring health, where it is health that is considered as the end. This kind of value is called instrumental value. In general, intrinsic value is what environmentalists seek to establish as they believe valuing natural entities intrinsically would be steadier and ensure consistent respect and protection.

Check you Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What do you understand by environmental ethics? What does it seek to do?

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17.3 ANTHROPOCENTRIC ETHICS

When what matters the most are human beings an anthropocentric ethics is envisaged. In this type of ethics all decisions are to be made keeping in mind the interests of human beings. This means that if an action is done to the benefit of human-beings then that action is the right action. Therefore, if human beings are entertained by hunting, then that is the right action to undertake. The criterion generally adopted here is rationality or self-consciousness.

Some ethicists argue that anthropocentrism alone is our starting point. This is because as humans ourselves we are only able to care directly for our own interests. Considering anthropocentrism in this way, they say, makes it a rational approach. This is not to suggest that the interests of others do not count at all. They may count and depending on how and to what extent they count, anthropocentrism may vary from extreme to moderate forms.

Extreme anthropocentrism

This anthropocentrism is often associated with narrow self-interests. Actions that attend to human needs and interests are the only ones that can be considered as right actions. Anthropocentrism, when reduced to its most extreme form, invites criticisms for various reasons. It is considered somewhat selfish to believe that only human interests and needs count.

Moderate anthropocentrism

In this anthropocentrism though decisions are based upon human interests, the interests of others are reasonably included in most cases by rationalizing that the wellbeing of the two is invariably related. Moderate anthropocentrism is thus associated with enlightened self-interest. This form of anthropocentrism has gained popularity amongst those who believe that completing neglecting anthropocentrism is not sensible as it is a denial of human identity. By recognizing human interests and recognizing at the same time how the interests of others are tied up with these interests it hopes to strike a balance. Furthermore, this anthropocentrism acknowledges that human beings themselves add many values that can have a positive impact on the protection of environment.

17.4 ANIMAL-CENTRED ETHICS

In this type of ethics moral concern is extended to human beings and animals. Various reasons can be given for including animals. A central one is sentience (and therefore ethicists

sometimes refer to this extension as sentientism). The word sentience, taken in a general sense, conveys the capacity to feel pain and pleasure. Since animals have this capacity, argue ethicists, their interests should matter morally. Often, we do not wish to harm or pain other humans just as we don't want to be harmed by others. The very same logic is extended to animals too. They suffer and thus we should not harm them or create conditions that do.

The treatment of animals has been of interest to philosophers since time immemorial. For instance, the early Greek philosopher Pythagoras spoke of vegetarianism and found both spiritual and the ethical reasons for supporting it. But, contrarily, Cartesian philosophy, that followed many hundreds of years later, through its sheer dualism reduced animals to matter alone. This framework implied that animals were of no worth or value, and were fit to be treated as resources only. Contemporary philosophers such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan argue strongly against such views and support the moral consideration of animals. These philosophers have based their arguments on sentience and animal rights (based on animals being subjects-of-a-life) respectively. The rights argument is considered to be strong grounds for according dignity to animals and respecting their basic needs of life, food and a suitable environment.

When we speak of animals, we must acknowledge that there are animals that exist in the wild and those that are domesticated. The number of animals in wilderness has seen a rapid decline as civilisation increases and human beings inhabit more areas covered by forests. With both human beings and animals vying for resources and space, severe displacement and extinction of many wild animals is an expected outcome. Furthermore, wild animals may be hunted for entertainment or for food or for resources such as ivory and bone and are further threatened through such practices. For a sentientist the latter practices would qualify as unethical.

Where domesticated animals are concerned, the arguments are equally complicated. Those ethicists who support that animals matter morally object to cruelty towards domesticated animals as well. What comes to mind immediately is kicking an animal or hitting one with a stick. But cruelty can be seen in different ways, for instance in killing animals for food. Animals may be raised to be eaten, either in farms or in factory farms. The latter are industrial facilities (mostly seen in Western countries) devoted to the production of meat and other animal products. These farms have become infamous for their treatment of animals: animals here are simply part of a mechanized process and raised inhumanely and unnaturally.

The concept of factory farms thus is often under a scanner and invites moral debate. However, even the so called ‘humane farming’ of animals, where they are raised kindly but eventually sacrificed to a butcher’s knife, is not free from controversy.

Apart from questions about how animals are raised for food, animal experimentation is another matter that is often debated. Ought animals be put through agonizing treatment in laboratories for the sake of scientific and medical breakthroughs that will save human lives? The outcomes of such debates vary. Some believe that animals can be sacrificed for the larger human interest. This may be considered an anthropocentric justification. However, a radical animal rights stand may not permit such a violation of animals and therefore reject animal testing completely. There may be other stands that may argue that animal experimentation be undertaken for the most urgent and pressing reasons and with great consideration for the suffering animals by using sufficient pain killers etc. But even this kind of selective and careful experimentation may be rejected on the ground that admitting exceptional cases dilutes principles making them ineffective.

The creation of zoological parks (zoos) is also considered as a form of cruelty by many and once again moral arguments are offered against them. It is often said in support of zoos that they are entertainment and educational devices that may also be beneficial for the protection of endangered species. In response it may be said that notwithstanding, zoos rob animals of their freedom and of the opportunity to live their lives in their natural surroundings. Moreover, with such an advance in technology three dimensional images of animals may provide a good enough education. All the above are some examples of how the treatment of animals invites ethical discussion.

There is no doubt that rethinking about how we treat animals is bound to lead to many lifestyle changes that we take for granted including what we eat, what we wear and how we entertain ourselves among others. Stopping animal experimentation may create even deeper problems. However, many animal-centred ethicists suggest that we can start with at least giving up some acts or objects involving animals that are trivial and not life endangering for us. Even the smallest changes, they believe, will make a big difference to the lives of animals.

17.5 BIOCENTRIC ETHICS

As a moral position, biocentrism includes all living entities. Since plants are living entities, they are also considered as deserving of moral attention like human beings and other animals.

However, the criterion for inclusion of all that is living has to be different. It cannot be sentience as this would exclude many non-animal life forms. (In general, environmental literature supports the premise that plants are not sentient.) In biocentrism the criterion is rather the struggle for survival and the capacity to be benefited or harmed. The narrower criterions therefore either of sentience or of consciousness and rationality are thus expanded further. Paul Taylor is a prominent ethicist supporting biocentrism.

A tree may not be conscious like an animal or a human being yet it will undertake necessary steps that aid its survival. A common experiment taught to children at school is to place a plant indoors in a shady corner of a room away from windows. They are asked to observe the plant through the next couple of days and weeks. Children report back that the plant has changed the direction of its leaves towards that window open to sun shine. Most plants can be seen to display such characteristics. Their roots may go deeper in search of water or they may grow higher in search of sunlight. They respond to good and bad surroundings and change themselves to make the most of their environment. When biocentrism includes plants as moral ends it is considering such features of plants and their capacity to survive. This capacity is not passive even though they do not exhibit conscious preferences or feelings and may not respond with happiness or joy.

However, if human beings, animals and plants are at par how can decisions be taken when a choice is to be made amongst them? In order to address this difficulty most forms of biocentrism acknowledge that equal interests are to be treated equally. This is a practical stance that supports the decision-making process. It suggests that a preference can be made on the basis of higher or more complex interests. Thus, an entity with simpler interests like a Neem tree is more likely to be overlooked in favour of one with stronger interests like a camel. Sometimes other things may matter too such as were the Neem tree on the verge of extinction, it would also be a worthy contender of moral attention. Some more radical forms of biocentrism support, on the contrary, egalitarianism i.e., all entities are to be treated equally. This undoubtedly can create practical problem.

Check your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the difference between an animal-centred ethics and a biocentric one?

17.6 ECOCENTRIC ETHICS

Other environmental ethicists believe that what matters goes beyond life and includes the natural world observed as full of rivers and seas, mountains and soil, as they all share the feature of being natural. The property of being a natural entity becomes the criterion for being identified as a moral end. This kind of ethics thus extends itself the most including the entities named above and more as deserving of moral consideration. It identifies animals and human beings, trees and plants as moral ends. But further to that, rivers, marshes and mountains matter as well.

However, this approach differs in one crucial way. In all the forms of ethics so far, it is the individual that matters and is of value. On the other hand, when natural entities are looked upon not individually but as a cohesive whole, i.e., holistically, the foundation of an ecocentric ethics is laid. All and not some natural entities contribute in making their surroundings what they are. Thus, ‘what matters’ here are not individual entities but rather entities in their interrelations. Moral ends thus include natural ecosystems and biodiversities. This way of moral extension is therefore quite different from all the others with their individualistic approach. A holistic ethics generally derives inspiration from ecology (a science that deals with the interrelationship of organisms and their environments) and can be influenced by ideas like that of GAIA (the Gaia principle suggests that everything on the planet, organic and inorganic, forms one system that regulates itself and that all aspects together contribute to the stability and optimization of life).

A holistic ethics is unique in seeking to protect biota, land and communities that can be found within nature. This implies that certain things may be sacrificed in order to maintain this balance. Thus, if some animals are to be culled in order to cut populations for a more stable ecosystem, then this task would be morally permitted. Such a decision may however go against those who support animal rights. Thus, variations in solutions reached through the

practice of one form of ethics or another are a distinct possibility. Another instance of such a variation was described above: animal testing may be acceptable on anthropocentric grounds but will not be acceptable to someone who wants to ensure the end of animal suffering.

Adopting any one ethical position comes with its own distinct problems. The problems that arise with a strong anthropocentrism have already been discussed above. Animal-centred ethics may be considered too narrow neglecting many important parts of nature. Also focusing on the welfare of individual animals may not always be conducive to a balanced ecosystem. Biocentrism on the other hand has to try hard to defend itself as it must establish the value of all life even though such life may have no sentient interests. Finally, ecocentrism can be criticized simply for the reason that wholes are nothing more than collections of individuals and it is difficult to place value on the whole as such. It can be added here that there are critics of these ethics of extension, that is of all the positions described above, saying that situations ought to be judged for what they are and decisions ought to be taken keeping in mind the context. Judging through narrowly focused ethics such as these may create added problems for decision makers.

17.7 WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

The above is just one of the first steps of how an environmental ethicist must proceed in her appraisal. Most environmental problems in application however are very complex and require deeper analysis. In this part we will look at one particular environmental issue in detail to understand what an ethicist must face in the real world: that issue is climate change and it will be discussed through four questions.

Climate change is the sustained change in climate and weather patterns over a period of time. Though changing climate is not a new phenomenon in earth's history, it is worrying today because gradual and slow climatic alterations have been replaced by unprecedented and accelerated changes. These are attributed to increased amounts of green-house gases (GHG) such as carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere. GHG's play an extremely important role in the regulation of the temperature of our planet. These gases allow the heat of the sun to enter the earth's atmosphere but do not allow all of it to escape, and thereby they are responsible for maintaining temperatures that are conducive to the existence of life.

With a steady increase in the production of GHGs since the industrial revolution the balance of these gases in the atmosphere has been disturbed and more heat than required is being

retained. The industrial revolution sparked off a kind of development that is heavily reliant on burning fossil fuels which emit carbon dioxide. The type of activities in the present-day industrial set-up, vehicular emission and life style choices have also added to the rapid increase of GHGs. This has led to global warming and to changes in climatic conditions. Thus, the reason for climate change is considered to be anthropogenic i.e., due to human activities. In the past there was some denial of human interference and it was said that climate change was a natural phenomenon. Even though such speculation continues to exist, it now is an almost unanimously accepted conclusion that human activities are largely to blame.

The changes in climate are reverberating through-out the world in unexpected and severer weather conditions, as mentioned in the introduction. Scientists have warned of the effects of melting glaciers, rising sea levels and altered ocean currents. It is believed that the results of climate change in the future are going to be harsher and some effects can already be seen: the frequency and force of hurricanes has increased, rainfall patterns are either on the upswing (causing flooding) or reduced greatly in intensity (causing droughts). Heat waves are commonly seen and forest fires are uncontrollable. Even though the exact effects of climate change cannot be predicted with certainty through the science that exists today, that its impacts will be extreme seems accepted by the scientific community.

17.7.1 Who will be affected by Climate Change?

There is no doubt that severely changing weather conditions will affect human beings. The unexpectedness of changes will make it hard to defend lives and homes and infrastructure. Farming, fishing and other forms of food production will suffer losses. Diseases that thrive in warmer climates will spread. It is estimated that changing sea levels will drown low lying areas and lead to large scale migration. The effects of climate change can lead thus to severe displacement of human communities. It is often pointed out that flooding and famines will affect the poor more than the rich and developing nations more than the developed ones.

However human beings will not be the only ones affected. Animals, plants and ecological systems also stand to lose heavily. The speed at which the climate is changing leaves very little room for species to adapt to their new conditions. Thus, some species may be wiped out completely. Dangers especially to marine species with changes in oceanic temperatures and water composition are becoming more and more visible. The wellbeing of future beings, both

humans and non-humans, is also at stake. Many effects of climate change not visible today will show up in the future and affect those who are yet to come.

Why is Climate Change a Moral Issue?

Thus far it seems that determining the nature of climate change is a matter that may lie in the domain of science. However significant reasons can be found that show that climate change is a moral matter as well.

If climate change is being accelerated by human activities, then human beings are responsible for it. This raises questions of responsibility. If a pilot has flown a helicopter without completing her training leading to a crash or if a doctor has performed a surgery in an inebriated state leading to a death, then it would be reasonable to hold them responsible for what happened respectively. Both the pilot and the doctor have the moral responsibility not to undertake an action that causes a harm and in doing so they have committed a wrong. Similarly, if climate change has happened due to the actions of human beings due to which harm has been caused then they ought to be held responsible. However, the matter here is not as simple as in the examples. The link between the action undertaken and harm caused is not a direct one in climate change. Ethical discussions on climate change have shown time and again that the cause (our actions) and effect (global warming) are separated both in space and time. What I do today in one part of the world could have an effect in another part of the world many decades later. Due to this lapse, it is hard to identify who exactly is responsible and to what extent and this dilutes the process of pinning blame and holding anyone responsible.

This discussion leads to the second problem that is faced by ethicists. Since the effects of human actions done today will show later it will affect (or harm) future generations and their wellbeing. But what do we owe future generations? Many believe that we owe them nothing as moral decisions must be made keeping recipients in mind. In this case the recipients don't exist. Many others argue that we must leave the world in a liveable shape for future people. If this is accepted then problems may arise when resources have to be shared between the present and future generations. Questions can be raised then whether the interests of the present living generation can be sacrificed for the non-existent generations that are to follow.

This discussion shows that problems of justice between generations are inevitable. However, the question of justice rears up in other matters too. One way of tackling climate change is

through reducing carbon emissions. But who will reduce these? Is the burden to be taken by developing countries at the expense of development or by developed countries that that will require their citizens to make several lifestyle changes? Historically it is the developed countries that have added huge amounts of GHGs and therefore it seems just that they be the ones to curb their emissions. However, it is noted that these countries never knew this cost of development and that it was an unintentional consequence for which they cannot be blamed in retrospect. Added to the justice debate is also the difference between carbon emissions between the rich and poor populations within countries. Many ethicists opine that the poor, who are the least responsible for the problem, will suffer the most in its aftermath. Thus, questions of fairness between developed and developing countries, the rich and poor and present and future generations complicate matters considerably.

So far, we have discussed moral matters concerning human beings. By its very nature our discussion has been within the bounds of an anthropocentric ethics. However, if we chose to pursue a non-anthropocentric ethic, say biocentrism or ecocentrism, then the effect of climate change on plants and animals would also have to be considered. This would increase the scope of action needed and can become a contentious issue when limited resources are to be shared between human and non-humans.

Check your Progress III

Biocentric ethics: This ethics extends moral status to all entities that are living and in doing so questions the narrow range of anthropocentric ethics.

Climate change: Sustained change in climate and weather patterns over a period of time is referred to as climate change.

Ecocentric ethics: This is a holistic ethics that values the whole of nature (including ecosystems) rather than individuals.

1. What is the cause of climate change?

How is Climate Change being addressed?

The world has had to come together to address climate change since it is a global matter that will have repercussions in every corner of the planet. International panels and agencies representing numerous countries have been set up. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up in the 1980's involving governments, scientists, think tanks and so on and since then has been giving timely scientific reports on climate change. The United Nations also set up a secretariat in 1992 as a result of many countries adopting the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 1997 the Kyoto protocol was adopted which like the UNFCCC is an international agreement whose signees were committed to certain targets in the reduction of GHG emissions. The Paris Agreement is also an example of a milestone agreement to address climate change even more forcefully and to increase and improve actions and undertakings for the sustainable reduction of GHG's. The UNFCCC secretariat regularly holds negotiating sessions as well called Conference of the Parties (COP) for the same (the latest one was held in November 2021).

In a recent report IPCC has concluded that the world must remain limited to a temperature increase of 1.5°C. A press release issued by this body says:

Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require rapid, far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society...With clear benefits to people and natural ecosystems, limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C could go hand in hand with ensuring a more sustainable and equitable society...(8 Oct 2018, [ipcc.ch/news_and_events/pdf/press/PR_SROCC-SRCCL_review_final.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/pdf/press/PR_SROCC-SRCCL_review_final.pdf))

Limiting global warming in this way and undertaking responses that check rising temperatures requires what have come to be known as mitigation efforts. Reducing the causes of climate change such as carbon emissions are covered by mitigation. Though the above-mentioned agreements may set down some guidelines and methods of proceeding with attaining mitigation targets, eventually the governments of countries have to take on the mantle of applying the guidelines and making suitable changes, say by increasing subsidies on solar and wind power or increasing taxation on vehicles to curb their demand and so on.

Another method of addressing climate change is through adaptation. This can include all actions that are undertaken to adapt or adjust to the effects of climate change. These may

include managing and safeguarding of forests and ecosystems and protecting species, planning for situations of food and water shortages, developing crops that are flood or drought resistant, fortifying of coastlines such that can survive rising sea levels and developing infrastructure that withstands harsh weather conditions.

Both the level and type of adaptation and mitigation have the scope of becoming moral issues as soon as questions are posed about how nations and individuals ought to contribute to them. It is ethicists that opine whether the contribution will be based on the history of carbon emissions or on their GDP and finances or on the number of persons that may suffer as a result. These tough questions are hard to answer and subject to much disagreement. The agreements mentioned above are thus are fraught with difficulty, dogged by disagreement and argument. However, time is fast running out and the climate crisis needs to be attended to urgently both by nations and by individuals.

17.8 LET US SUM

By extending the limits of morality to non-human beings, most forms of environmental ethics go beyond earlier traditional moral views that were limited to human beings alone. The earth is home to humans and non-humans and considerations of extension appear legitimate. Environmental ethicists have adopted other approaches too that provide alternative ways of reviewing the rightness and wrongness of actions concerning the natural world. However, whatever the approach, recognizing and respecting the value of nature remains primary.

The state of the environment is precarious. Climate change poses the ultimate threat to life as we know it. It goes without saying that the effort of communities and nations ought to be directed towards doing everything that is necessary to limit global warming and safeguard ecological health. But this does not lessen the role of individuals. Eventually individuals will have to find and adopt behaviours that are less selfish and more attuned to the greater good of the planet.

17.9 KEY WORDS

Anthropocentrism: Anthropocentrism is human centeredness and implies that only humans have moral value or that humans matter the most.

Biocentric ethics: This ethics extends moral status to all entities that are living and in doing so questions the narrow range of anthropocentric ethics.

Climate change: Sustained change in climate and weather patterns over a period of time is referred to as climate change.

Ecocentric ethics: This is a holistic ethics that values the whole of nature (including ecosystems) rather than individuals.

Intrinsic value: When an object or entity is valued for itself and not for its usefulness, then it is said to have intrinsic value

Sentience: The dictionary meaning of sentience is the capacity for sensation and feeling. In environmental ethics sentient beings have come to signify (particularly through the work of Peter Singer) those that can feel pleasure and pain or are able to enjoy and suffer.

17.10 FURTHER READINGS AND

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Websites

Environmental Ethics: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/envi-eth/>

Climate change and IPCC: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

17.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your Progress I

1. Environmental ethics may be defined as a form of applied ethics that determines the rightness and wrongness of actions directed towards the natural world. It finds out whether criterion can be found to question actions such as the cutting of trees and hunting of animals. Thus, as a discipline environmental ethics seeks to find principles and norms that would guide us in answering moral questions that are raised when human beings interact with nature.

Check your Progress II

1. An animal-centred ethics extends moral concern to human beings and animals. Animal-centrists believe that animals should be included either because they are sentient (have the capacity to feel pain or pleasure) or because they have rights (given that they experience life). Animal-centred views vary from radical to more moderate versions where equal interests may be treated equally. Lower life forms without sentience such as plants are therefore not included in this reckoning. Biocentric ethics, on the other hand, extends moral concern to all life forms including plants. Plants are included as they struggle for survival and they can be benefited or harmed whilst pursuing their good. A strong biocentrism can argue for the equal consideration of all living beings (egalitarianism) but a weaker one may consider interests differentially.

Check your Progress III

1. Climate change is a historical fact and refers to the sustained changes in climate and weather conditions over time. However, of late it has become an issue of great anxiety as slow alterations have been replaced by unprecedented, rapid changes. The cause is considered to be an increase in green-house gases such as carbon dioxide and methane that regulate the earth's temperature. And the cause of these increased gases in turn is anthropogenic i.e., due to human activities. The industrial revolution boosted production manifold. It also laid the ground for a fossil-fuel based economy which went hand in hand with carbon emissions. Carbon emissions from industrial activity have increased exponentially as the years have gone by. Other human activities and life style choices have also added fuel to fire – what we eat, how we travel and what we buy are all largely to blame for worsening the globalwarming threat.

UNIT 18 ETHICS AND TECHNOLOGY*

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Technology and Innovation
- 18.3 Values involved in Technology
- 18.4 Information Technology and its common concerns
- 18.5 Need of Ethics in the domain of Technology
- 18.6 Applying Ethics in Technological Developments
- 18.7 Two Ways of Doing Applied Ethics in Technology
- 18.8 Let us Sum Up
- 18.9 Key Words
- 18.10 Further Readings and References
- 18.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

18.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are,

- to explore the possible engagement between Ethics and Technology,
- to see whether technology impedes the core human values or not,
- to explore and analyse ethical issues in the light of value-based philosophical.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

Since technological advancements have been followed by relevant philosophical analyses that comprises of new approaches to the role of values in general, and ethical values in particular, the most recent accounts of technology involve its being accepted as value-laden, instead of its characterization as value-neutral. We observe primarily two sets of values in relation to technology, namely internal values and external values. Internal values are those that affect objectives, processes and outcomes of technology. Internal values are often perceived by engineers as internal to engineering technology, and its practice that includes values like technological enthusiasm, effectiveness and efficiency, reliability, robustness, maintainability and rationality. External values relate to effects of technology outside of the practice of

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engineering. External values are social, cultural, economic and ecological. Typical examples of external values are health and safety, human well-being, sustainability, and justice.

Internal values are often conceived as ends in themselves by engineers, while they are instrumental values in moral sense. The moral appropriateness of efficiency depends on the ends from which a technology is employed. External values like safety, health, and human well-being are considered final values; however to be effective in engineering, these values need to be internalized. While some values like safety and health have already been internalized in engineering over time, this internalization is now occurring or still to start for some other external values like human well-being, sustainability, and justice, thereby relevant technological developments are made morally acceptable. This proves that technology stands in a direct relation with ethical values, rather than being completely neutral from it.

18.2 TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The term “technology” comes from the Greek word “techne” which means a practical activity based on knowledge of experiences of the past and the present, which follows certain rules to get artistic products or to produce tools for useful purposes. It is a human undertaking that has higher aims than mere techniques, because technology is oriented towards creative transformation of previous reality (natural, social, or artificial) using scientific knowledge as well as specific technical knowledge. The product might be a noticeable change of nature (tunnel), a new kind of social reality (new social order in a country) or a visible artifact (an aircraft).

Technology includes variety of components. (1) It has its own language, due to its attention to internal constituents of the process (design, effectiveness, efficiency, etc.) and external factors (social, ecological, aesthetical, cultural, political, etc). (2) The structure of technological system is articulated on the basis of its operability, because technology should guide the creative activity of the human being that transforms nature, social reality, or artificial items. (3) The specific knowledge of the technological undertaking-know how- is instrumental and innovative: this kind of knowledge seeks to intervene in an actual realm, to dominate it and it employ it in order to serve human agents and society. (4) The method used is based on an imperative-hypothetical argumentation (Argumentation based on hypothetical imperative, “hypothetical imperative, in the ethics of the 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, a rule of conduct that is understood to apply to an individual only if he or she desires a certain end and has chosen (willed) to act on that desire.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hypothetical-imperative>). There are values regarding the

aims chosen and accompanying the technological processes. These values could be internal (such as realizing the goal at the lowest possible cost) and external (social, political, ecological, etc). They establish the conditions of viability of possible technology and its alternatives. (6) The reality itself of the technological process is supported by social human actions, which are based on intentionality oriented towards the transformation of the surrounding reality. (7) There are ethical values endogenous to technology, in so far as it is free human activity, and there are also exogenous values to the aims, processes, and results of technology, because this is a human undertaking developed in a social milieu. Hence, technology can be seen as a human activity, oriented to obtain creative and transformative domain of that reality-natural, social or artificial-on which it is working.

Technology is dynamic and innovative. The set of aims, processes, and results (products or artifacts) sought by technology belong to a dynamic framework. On the other hand as long as technology is a creative transformation of reality, innovation remains to be its crucial faculty. Innovation, as the characteristic feature of technology always replaces an outdated technology and brings changes in its various aspects, namely, technological designs, final products of artifacts obtained or replacing altogether into a new technology. Sometimes it precedes actual demands of the users for the new product.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is technology?

2. Examine the role of innovation in technology?

18.3 VALUES INVOLVED IN TECHNOLOGY

Technological progress and Innovation depends upon two basic values, namely, internal and external. Technology being different from other human activities such as philosophy, science and art, its structural dimension involves taking into account a set of aspects, three of which are: (i) technology as a human knowledge, (ii) technology as a social undertaking oriented towards the creative transformation of reality, and (iii) technology as a product or artifact. Unquestionably, technology is a human knowledge that needs to choose aims. This selection is made in order to develop processes that are oriented towards the achievement of concrete results. In this regard, the knowledge “That” (descriptive), knowledge “How” (operative), and the knowledge “Whether” (evaluative) are involved. In effect, technology requires some scientific knowledge (That, descriptive), a specific technological knowledge (How, operative), and the knowledge about what is preferable instead of that merely preferred (Whether, evaluative). In this latter sphere of knowledge which is the evaluative rational values have a role related to the technological designs and the methodology used to develop such designs. In other words, technology, in choosing its aims and objectives requires some scientific knowledge, a specific technological knowledge, and the knowledge about what is preferable instead of that merely preferred. Accordingly each of these three important approaches to technology—as knowledge, human undertaking, and product or artifact— involves two main categories of values according to its status: “internal” and “external.”

18.3.1 Internal Values

Internal values are those that belong directly to technology itself or a specific technology (e.g., information technology), such as values regarding the design, the processes, and the results. They contribute directly to what technology is and ought to be. The values are “internal” in so far as they are endogenous for any technology or a particular version of it. Thus, they might be crucial for the possibility, operability, and availability of a technology (communicative, naval, spatial, industrial, civil, mines, etc.). In addition, these values are commonly considered by the agents that build up technology. Hence internal values are those that are perceived by engineers as internal to engineering practice and that do not refer to broader social goals and values. Internal values are typically context-independent, in the sense that they are relevant in various contexts of use. A typical example of internal value is

efficiency; which is an important value in engineering independent from the exact technology or the exact context of usage. Similarly, a value like technological enthusiasm is more or less independent from the technology developed. Internal values are often, although not necessarily always, perceived as final by engineers, i.e. as value that are strived for their own sake. However, as we will see below from moral point of view internal values are usually not final values.

Technological Enthusiasm

Technological enthusiasm is one of the internal values to the technology pertaining to the ideal of wanting to develop new technological possibilities and take up technological challenges. This is an ideal that motivates many engineers. One good example of technological enthusiasm is the development of Google Earth, a program with which, via the internet, it is possible to zoom in on the earth's surface. It is a beautiful concept but it gives rise to all kinds of moral questions, for instance in the area of privacy (where we can study other persons backyard activities in great detail) and in the field of security, as terrorist could use it to plan attacks. In a recent documentary on the subject of Google Earth one of the program developers admitted these important questions. Nevertheless, when developing the program these were matters that the developers had failed to consider because they were so driven by the challenge of making it technologically possible for everyone to be able to study the earth from behind his or her PC (Personal Computer). Technological enthusiasm in itself is not morally improper; it is in fact positive for engineers to be intrinsically motivated as far as their work is concerned. The inherent danger of technological enthusiasm lies in the possible negative effects of technology and the relevant social constraints being easily overlooked.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effectiveness and efficiency are other two internal values pertaining to technology that engineers strive to pursue. Effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which an artifact fulfils its function. Efficiency could be defined as the ratio between the degree to which an artifact fulfills its function and the effort required to achieve that effect. Efficiency in the modern sense is usually construed as an output/input ratio. The energetic efficiency of a coal plant may thus be defined as the ratio between the energy contained in the power produced and the thermal energy contained in the unburnt coal. Effectiveness and efficiency are different values that may well conflict. The design that most effectively fulfill is its intended function may not necessarily be the most efficient one. A very effective vacuum cleaner that

removes more dust than a less effective one may nevertheless be less energy-efficient, that is to say, it may use more energy per unit of dust removed than the less effective vacuum cleaner. So, we may be faced with a conflict between effectiveness and efficiency. The drive to strive towards effectiveness and efficiency is an attractive value for engineers because it is apparently neutral and objective. It does not seem to involve any political or moral choices, which is something that many engineers conceive as subjective, and therefore wish to avoid. Efficiency is also something that contrasts, for example, with human welfare. Efficiency is an ideal that endows engineers with authority because it is something that one can hardly oppose and that can seemingly be measured objectively. From a moral point of view however efficiency and effectiveness are not always worth pursuing. That is because effectiveness and efficiency suppose an external goal in relation to which they are measured. That external goal can be to consume a minimum amount of non-renewable natural resources to generate energy, but also war or even genocide. It was no coincidence that Nazi bureaucrats like Eichmann were proud of the efficient way in which they were able to contribute to the so called ‘resolving of the Jewish question’ in Europe which led to the murdering of six million Jews, and other groups that were considered inferior by the Nazis like Gypsies and patients with mental health issues. The matter of whether effectiveness or efficiency is morally worth pursuing therefore depends very much on the ends for which they are employed. So, although some engineers maintain the opposite view, yet the measurement of the effectiveness and efficiency of a technology is value-laden. It proposes a certain goal for which the technology is to be employed and that goal is value laden.

18.3.2 External Values

External values are values that are related to effects of technology on other practices. Typical examples are safety, health and sustainability. They typically refer to broader human, social, environmental and political goals. External values are final in a moral sense. Although external values find their origin outside the engineering practice, they may be internalized, for example, through technical codes and standards. This has typically happened with a value such as safety, and is increasingly happening with sustainability, which would aid its long-term success.

18.3.2.1 Safety and Health

Safety and health are without doubt among the main external values in engineering. Most US codes of ethics declare these values to be paramount in engineering. Safety is sometimes defined as the absence of risk and hazards. Even if risk reduction is not feasible it may not be

desirable from a moral point of view. Reducing risk often comes at a cost. Safer products may be more difficult to use, more expensive or less sustainable. Yet it is a general human belief that whatever is harmful for our existence should not be pursued.

Health is defined as “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization 2006). In engineering, the focus is usually on avoiding negative influences on human health. The possibilities of new technologies, like biotechnology and nanotechnology, have also led to a debate on whether technology should only aim at curing illness and perhaps improving health or should also contribute to improving humans and their achievements. The latter is known as human enhancement. However, there is a debate on the morality of human enhancement.

Health and safety are often seen as final values from a moral point of view. It might also be argued that these values are not really valuable in themselves but rather contribute to the good life, and therefore, their contribution is constitutive of the overarching value of human well-being.

18.3.2.2 Human well-being

Several engineering codes of ethics state that ‘engineers shall use their knowledge and skill for the enhancement of human welfare’. Also, in other engineering texts and methods, one finds references to external values like human welfare, happiness, quality of life, human flourishing, the good life, and well-being. In moral philosophy, human well-being is generally seen as a final value, that is worthwhile for its own sake, rather than to achieve something else. The general belief is that technology is meant for humans and not vice-versa.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on Internal & External value?

18.4 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ITS COMMON CONCERNS

Since the domain of technology is multi-facted, in this section we will be specifically focussing upon some common concerns of Information Technology, which has become a necessary part of our day to day lives. In the midst of many technological breakthroughs in recent years the importance of ethics and human values has been underemphasized. IT has grown rapidly due to its ability to capture and store a vast amount of personal data on the web, and display or auction it for public consumption. Some of the common issues in information technology, as an example are:

18.4.1 Privacy

Privacy is a fundamental right of individuals and is an essential condition for the exercise of self-determination. The ability to control personal information is an important factor in sustaining privacy. Organizations are increasingly computerizing the processing of personal information. This may be without the consent or knowledge of the individuals concerned. There has been a growth in databases holding personal and other sensitive information in multiple formats of text, pictures and sound. The scale and type of data collected and speed of data exchange have changed with the advent of computers. The potential to breach people's privacy at less cost and to greater advantage continues to increase. Computer privacy is a new twist on an old ethical problem and involves issues which have not been previously raised or cannot be predicted.

18.4.2 Inappropriate Sharing of Information

Every organization stores vast amounts of information that can be classified as either private or confidential. Private data describes individual employees-for example, their salary information, attendance data, health records, and performance ratings. Private data also includes information about customers credit card information, telephone numbers, home address, and so on. Confidential information describes company and its operations including sales and promotion plans staffing projects, manufacturing processes, product formulas, tactical strategic plans and research development. An IT user who shares such information with an unauthorized party violates someone's privacy and places the fortunes of company into the hands of competitors. For example, if an employee accessed a coworker's payroll records via human resources computer system and then discussed them with his friend; it would amount to violation of the coworkers' privacy.

Exceptions: However, sometimes individuals have to give up some of their personal privacy in order to achieve some overall social benefit. For example, a social services department might hold sensitive information about individuals that provides an accurate profile of individual tendencies, convictions and so on. The sharing of this data with, for example, the local education authority in cases of child sex offenders living in the area might be considered morally justified even though it might breach individual privacy. Balancing the rights and interests of different parties in a free society is difficult. The acceptable balance will be specific to the context of a particular relationship and will be dependent upon trust between concerned parties and subscription to the principle of informed consent. This balance might incur the problem of protecting individual privacy while satisfying government and business needs. Such problems are indicative of a society that is becoming increasingly technologically dependent.

18.4.3 Digital Divide

Digital divide policy attempts to provide technological tools and develop community organizations that respond to a perceived lack of access or lack of information among supposed technological have-nots. Against their creators best intentions, however, many digital divide programs actually work to restrict the scope of the high-tech equity agenda because they rely on a difficult orientation that labels neighborhoods ‘poor’ or ‘undeserved’ and therefore underestimate the considerable resources, skills, and experiences of these communities. These programs can obscure how powerful trapped in the digital divide institutions such as the criminal justice system, the social service system, and the low-wage workplace operate to structure people’s relationship to IT. They also privatize and individualize high-tech equity issues as access issues, limiting opportunities for social mobilization. Most technology policy, firmly planted in the tradition of universal access, ignores non-distributional issues and misrepresents the empirical realities of living in the information age, offering individualized and market solutions to broadly structural problems. The overreliance on the distributive paradigm in digital divide policy and programming is at the heart of our inability to recognize and address some of the most pressing social justice issues of the information age.

18.4.4 Inappropriate Use of Computing Resources

Some employees use their computers to surf popular web sites that have nothing to do with their jobs, participate in chat rooms, view pornographic sites, and play computer games. These activities eat away at work productivity and waste time. Furthermore, activities such as

viewing sexually explicit material, sharing lewd jokes, and sending hate email could lead to lawsuits and allegations that a company allowed to work environment conducive to racial or sexual harassment. Organizations contact millions of people worldwide through unsolicited email as an extremely low cost marketing approach. Hackers break into databases of financial and retail institutions to steal customer information, and commit identity theft to make purchases or carry out business on another's name. Students around the world have been caught downloading materials from the web and plagiarizing content for their term papers. Website plant cookies or spyware on visitors' hard drives and track their online purchases and activities.

18.5 NEED OF ETHICS IN THE DOMAIN OF TECHNOLOGY

We have seen that the aims, processes and results of technology have tangible consequences for the citizens, markets and organizations. The reason is clear: technology is oriented towards the creative transformation of the reality. Thus, its design looks to change existing reality (natural, social, or artificial) to produce new results. When the product is an artifact (airplane, automobile, computer, cell phone, tablet, etc.), the lives of the members of society can be directly affected. These changes might favor social development or they may be against the common good of citizens. External values can have a role in the three main stages of the technological doing. (1) They can intervene in the design, because technology uses scientific knowledge (know that), specific technological knowledge (know how), and evaluative knowledge (know whether). Thus, technology can take into account exogenous values (social, economic, ecological, etc.) in the design. This "external" task is clear in many technological innovations (smart phones, tablets, large airplanes, etc.), because they should consider the users of the product and the potential economic profitability of the new artifact. (2) The technological processes are developed in public or private enterprises, which are organized socially according to some values (economic, cultural, political, etc.) and with an institutional structure (owners, administrators, etc.) (3) The final result of technology is a human-made product (commonly, an artifact) to be used by society, and it has ordinarily an economic evaluation in markets and organizations. Thus, in so far as technology is ontologically social as a human doing, it can be evaluated according to values accepted in the society. Furthermore, its product is commonly an item for society (even in the case of technology regarding nature, such as in the case of a tunnel). Moreover, the criteria of society have a considerable influence in promoting some kind of technological innovations (with their patents) or an alternative technology (with a new design, processes and product).

Frequently, from the perspective of external values, technology is viewed with concern, especially in the case of recent phenomena (e.g., in accidents related to nuclear energy, the use of biotechnology with human beings, the nano-technological risks, or in the dangers of new technologies such as hydraulic fracturing). These external values are very influential in the reflection on the limits of technology, when philosophy asks for the bounds or ceiling of technology. This analysis of the terminal limits of technology should take into account the internal values as well as the external values (social, cultural, political, ecological, aesthetic, economic, etc.). In this regard, philosophy of technology considers the external values in the context of a democratic society interested in the well-being of its citizens, thinking that their members can contribute to decision making (e.g., by means of associations or through the members of the parliament). The study of the limits of technology includes the prediction of what technology can achieve in the future, but also require the prescription of what should be done according to certain values. This prescriptive dimension of the external values of technology is more noticeable when there are clear risks for society at stake, either for the present or for the future. Frequently, behind the analysis of values in technology, there are some influential philosophical orientations regarding what technology is and ought to be.

18.6 APPLYING ETHICS IN TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Although ethics is not just a feeling, any attempt to seek for a single ethical system or for a single answer for moral questions is likely to be met by the casual observer with the claim that ‘there are no objectively right or wrong answers to moral questions; they are just a matter of what people feel’. This observer, it should be noted, has effectively proposed a system for ethics—that one should act in accordance with one’s feelings—on the basis of strong objective claim about the nature of ethics that there are no right or wrong answers. Unless the observer is to lapse into self-contradiction by claiming that all truth is just a matter of what people feel (i.e. by claiming that this is an accurate or true description of reality), s/he has also, at least, made the general nature of ethics the subject of rational argument. This becomes clear if we disagree with her claim because she would not be able to resort to commonly agreed canons of sound reasoning, in order to seek to demonstrate the truthfulness of her position. Therefore, moral relativism cannot be sustained for long, as it is self-contradictory. In order that we choose right kind of ethical values that do not encroach upon others rights we have to choose a particular ethical position, and judge our technological innovation accordingly.

18.6.1 Applying Normative Theories

What does the term “applied” in “applied ethics” signify? It can be instructively compared to other applied disciplines. In applied mathematics, a mathematical theory is used to solve some problem outside of pure mathematics. The theory itself is not changed or significantly extended in the process of its application. In the same way, applied ethics can be seen as a discipline, or collection of disciplines, in which moral theory is used as a tool to solve moral problems in various practical areas. Some moral philosophers have indeed furthered that approach. Bernard Gert (1982) defined applied ethics as “the application of an ethical theory to some particular moral problems or set of problems.” The most renowned proponent of this view is Peter Singer, who advocates the use of utilitarian moral theory to determine what is right and wrong in bioethics and other areas of applied ethics. However, most researchers in the various areas of applied ethics, including the ethics of technology, do not seem to concur. There are at least three serious problems with the idea that area-specific ethics should consist in the application of an ethical theory.

Choice problem

The first of these is the theory choice problem. There are quite a few moral theories around, and despite centuries of discussion moral philosophers have not managed to agree on which of them is right. To put it somewhat bluntly, moral philosophers tend to agree that one of the available moral theories is the one and only, correct theory. However, they do not agree on which is that theory. For applied ethicists, the prevailing disagreement on which is the right moral theory can make the approach of “applying moral theory” seem arbitrary. This is in sharp contrast to applied mathematics and physics, both of which build on thoroughly validated theories that are not subject to serious doubt.

Derivation problem

The second problem is the derivation problem. For a moral theory to be useful in the intended way for applications, it would have to provide sufficient information for determining what is right and wrong in the various practical cases that applied ethicists are expected to analyze. When we have the facts of a case, it should be possible to combine these facts with the theory in question and derive univocally a determinate answer to our moral questions. However, this type of derivation does not usually work in practice, since fundamental moral theories have surprisingly little to say on the problems that are the focus in applied ethics. One can for instance find a utilitarian and a deontologist who agree on most of the ethical issues in health care, although they have different underpinnings for their standpoints. The reason for this is

that moral theories operate on an abstract level, and most practical moral problems cannot be connected in an unequivocal way to principles or standpoints on that level.

18.6.1.3 Novelty problem

Thirdly, we have the moral novelty problem. Ideally, moral theories are thought of as timeless. If there is a unique, correct moral theory, then a sufficiently sagacious ancient thinker should—in principle—have been able to discover it. But the timelessness of moral theories can be put to serious doubt. Developments in human society unceasingly provide us with moral novelties, that is, new problems that cannot be solved with the existing moral theories. Some of the most pressing problems in modern medical ethics, such as brain death, and human enhancement, require considerations of issues that had not been covered in previously presented moral theories. The problem of moral novelties is pervasive in the ethics of technology, due to its strong focus on new and emerging technologies, some of which have aspects that preexisting moral theories do not cover. This can be seen, for instance, from the discussions on information technology, virtual reality, space travel, and biotechnology, all of which refer to issues not foreseen in preexisting moral theories. Here as well we can note a stark contrast to mathematical and physical theory, both of which have a strong claim to timelessness.

Applied ethics is far from the only applied discipline that fails to satisfy the strict definition of application referred to above. Most forms of applied science include the creation of genuinely new theory, for the simple reason that the theories developed in the basic sciences do not suffice for solving the applied problems. This is true, for instance, of applied linguistics and applied psychology. Arguably, application in the strict sense of using a theory as a tool without changing it is only possible if the theory in question is broad and exceptionless enough to cover unaided a whole area of knowledge. As we have seen, a strong case can be made that ethical theory in its current form is not suitable for pure application. This does not necessarily mean that we should give up the term “applied ethics,” but we may have to define it differently than what we did above. The word “apply” also has the more general meaning of putting something to use. The ethics of technology is certainly ethics put to use, and the same is true of medical ethics, research ethics, etc. If application is interpreted in this way, as putting to use, then the term “applied ethics” is uncommitted on what role—if any—moral theory should have. However, before throwing moral theories overboard, we need to consider carefully what we want to put in their place. Academic ethics should be able to provide a systematized account of our well-considered moral judgments and their

implications. Moral theories are highly useful to achieve such systematicity. Presumably, we do not wish to be thrown back to just collecting and reporting prevailing moral opinions on the various issues we are studying. If we give up the idea of conducting applied ethics as a straightforward application of moral theory, then we need to find either some other way to use moral theories, or some other means than moral theories to achieve systematicity and cohesion.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on the derivation problem.

18.7 TWO WAYS OF DOING APPLIED ETHICS IN TECHNOLOGY

This section will discuss two ways of doing applied ethics in technology. The two ways are, 1. Tempered use of moral or ethical theories, 2. Replacement of moral or ethical theories.

Tempered Use of Moral Theories

At the very minimum, we can use concepts developed in various moral theories as tools in our moral analysis. This will provide us with conceptual tools to express moral issues and standpoints with more precision than by using what is available in everyday language. Terms such as prima facie rights, residual obligations, supererogatory actions, moral luck, and a host of others can be used to describe issues and standpoints more accurately and to characterize the similarities and differences between different cases. This is one of the reasons why studies of moral philosophy are a necessary prerequisite for professional competence in applied ethics. Stepping up our usage of moral theories, we can employ their central thought patterns as tools in our moral analysis, without assigning absolute precedence to any of these

thought patterns. For instance, utilitarianism can be seen as a precise and exclusive version of a common thought pattern in colloquial moral reasoning—namely, that of weighing advantages and disadvantages against each other. Even if we do not put such weighing on top of all moral considerations, we have its use for important distinctions from utilitarian theory about the conduct of weighing, for instance: Should only material consequences of our options be put on the scale, or should they be joined by nonmaterial effects such as rights infringements? Should the weights be determined by the individual concerned or by uninvolved observers? Should the interests of all persons be included (as required by utilitarianism) or only those of particularly concerned persons (such as patients in medical ethics)? Similarly, deontology systematizes the everyday concept of limits to what one may or may not do, contract theory the everyday notion of adhering to agreements and commitments, and virtue ethics the everyday ideal of developing one’s moral character and doing what one’s best self would do.

Even if we do not give one of these thought patterns priority over all the others, we have much use for their more rigorous versions that have been developed in moral theories. Moral theories are given an even more important role in the method of searching for a reflective equilibrium. In a general sense, a reflective equilibrium is a state of mind that is sufficiently thought through so that additional thinking will not lead to any changes in standpoints. It can be described as a stable state or a state in which coherence has been achieved. In ethics, the area in which the notion of a reflective equilibrium has been most influential, the focus is on the relationship between our judgments on individual cases and our more general moral standpoints as expressed in moral theories. Proponents of a reflective equilibrium maintain that our specific and general judgments should be adjusted to each other, rather than one of them being given precedence over the other. The term “reflective equilibrium” was coined by John Rawls (1971), who also put this method to effective use in developing his theory of social justice. In subsequent discussions, distinctions have been made between several variants of reflective equilibria, most importantly between narrow and wide reflective equilibria (Rawls 1974). A narrow reflective equilibrium is achieved when we deliberate on a single case or a small group of (real or hypothetical) cases in relation to a moral theory, arriving through mutual adjustment at a coherent theoretical account of these cases. A wide reflective equilibrium covers our moral beliefs in full generality, and will therefore have to be based on deliberations potentially including all our ethical judgments and principles. In applied ethics, the focus is usually on narrow reflective equilibria. Unsurprisingly, appeals to

reflective equilibria have been criticized by proponents of moral theories, who deny that our intuitive judgments about particular cases should induce adjustments of fundamental moral theory. Reflective equilibria have also been denounced by moral particularists, who dismiss moral theories altogether. Even some philosophers who recognize the pertinence of both particular and general moral judgments have pronounced severe doubts about reflective equilibria. However, in spite of these limitations, many researchers in applied ethics have found the ideal of a reflective equilibrium to be a useful tool for dealing with disaccord between particular judgments and general moral principles.

Replacement of Moral Theories

Another response to the difficulties in using moral theories in area-specific work is to replace them by principles that provide more distinct guidance in the respective areas. This is the approach commonly taken in medical ethics, whose “standard” approach is based on the following four principles: Autonomy: “Personal autonomy is, at a minimum, self-rule that is free from both controlling interferences by others and from limitations, such as inadequate understanding, that prevent a meaningful choice.” Non-maleficence: “The principle of non-maleficence asserts an obligation not to inflict harm on others.” Beneficence: “Morality requires not only that we treat persons autonomously and refrain from harming them, but also that we contribute to their welfare.” Justice is “fair, equitable, and appropriate treatment in light of what is due or owed to persons.” These principles form the basis of the ethical education of most physicians and other health-care personnel, and they are continuously referred to in ethical committees around the globe. The term “principlism” was introduced by Clouser and Gert (1990) to denote the ethical discourse that is based on them. The four principles are usually conceived as intermediate between “low-level” particular judgments and “high-level” moral theories such as utilitarianism and deontology. However, the practical employment of the four principles does not hinge on their inclusion in a larger structure that also includes some moral theory. Probably, most users of the principles lack a determinate opinion on which—if any—higher-level criterion they should be combined with. As should be fairly obvious, there are situations in which the four principles run into conflict. There are no generally accepted guidelines for how to deal with such conflicts. Consequently, principlism differs from moral theories in lacking an all-encompassing mechanism for adjudicating between competing moral arguments. Instead, case-based intuitions about the relative importance of the principles will have to be resorted to. Largely for that reason, principlism tends to be less popular among moral philosophers than among practicing

physicians. The following is a forceful expression of that criticism: Our general contention is that the so-called “principles” function neither as adequate surrogates for moral theories nor as directives or guides for determining the morally correct action. Rather they are primarily chapter headings for a discussion of some concepts which are often only superficially related to each other. The principles of Rawls and Mill are effective summaries of their theories; they are shorthand for the theories that generated them. However, this is not the case with principlism, because principlism often has two, three, or even four competing “principles” involved in a given case, for example, principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence, and nonmaleficence. This is tantamount to using two, three, or four conflicting moral theories to decide a case. Indeed some of the “principles”—for example, the “principle” of justice—contain within themselves several competing theories. Some ethicists have wished to apply principlism to the ethics of technology. However, it has not always been realized that—with the possible exception of the ethics of medical technology—this will require extensive reworking of the principles. A major reason for this is that clinical decision making has its focus on an individual patient, whereas decisions on technology often concern large and diverse groups of people who may well have conflicting interests. For instance, the practice of informed consent cannot be transferred from clinical medicine to the context of technological innovation and development, since it would give single individuals veto power to stop projects with large advantages for many others (Hansson 2006). The formulation of principlism for (various forms of) technology remains to be performed. It may very well be a worthwhile undertaking.

18.8 LET US SUM

We began by saying that technology is value laden. However we have discovered that Technology cannot be seen from the confines of absolute value system. The pervasive role of modern technology and its particular importance in the development of sophisticated weapons means that scientists cannot avoid facing their ethical implications. One viable solution is that just as technology is dynamic, ethical aspects of technology would largely depend upon particular instances at hand.

18.9 KEY WORDS

Technology: The term “technology” comes from the Greek word “techne” which means a practical activity based on knowledge of experiences of the past and the present, which follows certain rules to get artistic products or to produce tools for useful purposes.

External Values: External values are values that are related to effects of technology on other practices. Typical examples are safety, health and sustainability.

Internal Values: Internal values are those that belong directly to technology itself or a specific technology, such as values regarding the design, the processes, and the results.

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18.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. The term “technology” comes from the Greek word “techne” which means a practical activity based on knowledge of experiences of the past and the present, which follows certain rules to get artistic products or to produce tools for useful purposes. technology is oriented towards creative transformation of previous reality (natural, social, or artificial) using scientific knowledge as well as specific technical knowledge.
2. As long as technology is a creative transformation of reality, innovation remains to be its crucial faculty. Innovation, as the characteristic feature of technology always replaces an outdated technology and brings changes in its various aspects, namely, technological designs, final products of artifacts obtained or replacing altogether into a new technology.

Check Your Progress II

1. Internal values are those that belong directly to technology itself or a specific technology (e.g., information technology), such as values regarding the design, the processes, and the results. They contribute directly to what technology is and ought to be. A typical example of internal value is efficiency; which is an important value in engineering independent from the exact technology or the exact context of usage. External values are values that are related to effects of technology on other practices. Typical examples are safety, health and sustainability. Although external values find their origin outside the engineering practice, they may be internalized through technical codes and standards.

Check Your Progress III

1. For a moral theory to be useful in the intended way for applications, it would have to provide sufficient information for determining what is right and wrong in the various practical cases that applied ethicists are expected to analyze. When we have the facts of a case, it should be possible to combine these facts with the theory in question and derive univocally a determinate answer to our moral questions. However, this type of derivation does not usually work in practice, since fundamental moral theories have surprisingly little to say on the problems that are the focus in applied ethics.

UNIT 19 INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL ETHICS*

Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Professionalism and Professional ethics
- 19.3 Why Ethics matters in Profession
- 19.4 Some Issues
- 19.5 Data Breach
- 19.6 Ethical and Unethical Hacking
- 19.7 Corporate frauds
- 19.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.9 Key Words
- 19.10 Further Readings and References
- 19.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

19.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are as follows:

- To understand what is professional ethics.
- To explain what is professionalism.
- To understand the need of being ethical in any profession.

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- To understand and analyze the role of ethical norms, rules and regulations, and how we can maximize the actualization of these codes of conduct to practical situations with the help of examples.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

Ethics is primarily concerned with what one ought to do, along with defining and analysing the concepts of right and wrong. When the setup of ethical norms and practices to consider an act right or wrong is made up on objective grounds, then it is usually considered that what is right, good, or bad for one person; would be right, good, or bad for everyone, irrespective of the conditions or context of any individual, culture, and society. The ideal ethical norms and principles that killing, telling lie, and cheating is wrong, that treating people as a mere means is not right, are applicable on everyone, they can be universalized, or they seek the happiness of maximum human beings. They are not usually confined to any given particular context or perspective. These objective grounds for determining what is good, right, and wrong might not work in some crucial situations where it becomes difficult to decide the rightness or wrongness of an action. Saying this, however, should not be seen as accepting the position of moral relativists, that our moral judgements, notions of truth-falsity, right-wrong are always dependent on context or perspective of a culture. What is right and acceptable in one cultural practice may not be acceptable in another culture. The possibility of accepting universal values would then become negligible. The problem arises when sometimes we find ourselves in such a situation where it becomes so difficult to take a decision in line with the fundamental ethical principles. Ethical dilemmas of real life situations involve much more layers of complexities which make it too hard to resolve these dilemmas based on any single conventional principle. Applied ethics deals with these real life situations where we try to find out the moral possibility/permissibility of specific acts. It seems to be an important requirement to consider the conditions and circumstances in which an action has been performed or about to be performed before taking any decision about the rightness or wrongness of that action. It demands to think and reflect upon the whole situation. The issues and debates of applied ethics demand a critical analysis, and an evaluation of our conventional moral principles. Morality should not be considered as a preachment and lessons to live an ideal life. Being an integral element of philosophy, there always remains a scope to reason, to think, to critically analyse and examine the customary and traditional set of principles, to question the eternal nature of these principles. This is how we move towards

the path of reflective morality in order to test the effectiveness of the established moral rules in a particular situation, whenever it is required. Reflective morality does not reject the conventional moral principles, it only helps in reaching to a better decision by presenting such an approach that either adds some novel element or subtracts the unnecessary element to resolve a particular issue.

Suppose, for example, a person who works as an accountant in a big private firm, his father gets seriously ill and has to be hospitalized. He requires bulk amount of money for his father's operation. His boss is very strict and he believes that if he would ask for money, his boss would never give him. That is why he took the money from company's account without informing his boss in order to save the life of his father. He saves his father's life, and gradually with time he kept all the money back into the accounts of the company. Now the question is how we would determine the rightness or wrongness of the act performed. The person was in an ethical dilemma, we all are know that stealing money cannot be said a morally right action, but at that time saving someone's life was the most important and primary act, the means he selected was obviously not a professionally right one, but he did it under unavoidable circumstances where he did not have any other available option for saving life of his father. Keeping the whole situation in mind we may ask what action his boss would take now, should he punish his employee for not informing him, or for not taking permission before taking the money? The answer could not simply be given in affirmative or negative terms as it requires reflecting upon the criticality of the whole situation. In situations like these the need arises to think in a different direction and it also requires careful, critical examination of the customary moral principles.

Based on the varieties of concepts and nature of the problem, ethics is being sub-divided in some main approaches like normative ethics, metaethics, and applied ethics. Professional ethics comes under applied ethics wherein we attempt to resolve the realistic issues such as conflict of interests in a profession, doctor-patient relationship, surrogacy, abortion, environmental issues, suicide, euthanasia, capital punishment etc. with the help of ethical principles. Professional ethics falls into the domain of applied ethics because it is concerned with rules, regulations, and norms to be followed in any profession, and these rules ultimately falls back on the concept of what is good, right, and appropriate.

19.2 PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The term professionalism stands for the way one performs his/her actions in a profession. This way may include a bundle of things in itself, the practices, the standards, the values, skills, education, and training. Professionalism requires mastery over the theoretical knowledge, but only theoretical competence is not enough, a professional should be able to implement the theory into practice.

Professional ethics, as the name suggests, defines and codifies certain ethical norms necessary for all professions. We find codes of conduct and the codes of ethics in professions. The codes of conduct may vary according to different professions, e.g. engineers will be having different codes of conducts from those of medical associations, but we will find same guiding moral principles in every profession. These moral principles govern the behaviour of a professional in ethical decision-making, specifically in a situation of ethical dilemmas. An organisation/institution/company is committed to certain values and it includes ethical responsibilities of a profession. Transparency, impartialness, openness, and loyalty are few desirable characteristic traits of a professional.*

Let us take one example which highlights the unprofessional behaviour of a company. Some cases of raid and arrest of call centers employees were registered in a country. The charge was that the employees used to extort money from foreign nationals. A large amount of money has been taken away from citizens of other countries by these call centers. These call centers appointed young people for this work, trained them to speak foreign language. These employees used to call people of other countries, threaten them and force them to pay millions of dollars. Despite continuous complaints, no action was taken against these fraudulent call centers. Firstly, these types of acts lead us to think how young generation can easily be provoked by the call centers to involve in these unlawful activities only to gain large amount of money by keeping all the values of honesty, dignity and respect aside. Secondly the unprofessional attitude of the call center put down the reputation and image of all other call centers of that country as well, and thirdly the inaction and unprofessionalism showed at the level of the country also affects the relation of two countries.

These unethical acts always involve a risk - risk of losing the job, risk of being caught and arrested, and risk of losing self-respect. Despite being aware of the risk factors involved in these unethical acts, what is the guiding factor that encourages people to perform these kinds of acts, why money-factor, the accumulation of money for personal gains stands over and

*Subramanian. R. *Professional Ethics includes Human Values*, Oxford University Press, 2017. P. 9.

above all moral values and the respect for one's own and other's life? Undoubtedly these offers may seem tempting at first sight, but neither the intention of doing these acts nor can the outcome be said to be good or right for anyone involved in the act. These kinds of cases are a matter of concern for everyone, these incidents usually come and go without much attention of people as if we come across these cases daily and we are habitual and used to hearing these incidents as bits of information only. The problem is much deeper than it seems to be, one should not take these issues very lightly and ignore them. If these incidents often happen, it does not mean that more frequency of their occurrences reduces the gravity of the issue, how can it make the issue ignorable? On the other hand, the gravity of the issue must be increased when all the moral values, laws, rules, and codes of conduct fail to stop or at least reduce the frequency of these illegal acts, and lead us all to think on reasons of failure to control such actions.

19.3 WHY ETHICS MATTERS IN PROFESSION?

A Profession always stands in relation to the other, a professional always seeks for good professional relations, a bonding with the other is required for the survival, and progress of a profession, for example bonding between patient and doctor, between a lawyer and his/her client. What is the nature of this bonding, what binds a professional with the other? To maintain this professional relation, we devise certain rules. There are certain codes of conduct and codes of ethics in every workplace. In a workplace, the nature of codes of conduct depends on the type of institution/organization, and they may vary from profession to profession. The codes of conduct are not morally binding in nature, codes of conduct in a profession state kind of actions that are either permitted or prohibited for a professional, these actions are directional in nature; codes of ethics, on the other hand, are statements of value, or guiding principles needed to guide the behaviour of the professionals. The canvas of the codes of ethics is much broader than the codes of conduct. Codes of ethics are the guiding principles that guide professionals to work with honesty, without discrimination, and they are aimed towards public good. These codes of ethics help an organization resolve the situations of ethical dilemma and in decision making; in issues like conflict of interests, safety, and harassment in a workplace. The moral values in all professions are of the same nature, but the decision that is taken in a particular situation in different professions would depend on considering the context, complexities and nitty-gritty of that situation. In medical profession, the ultimate objective of a doctor is to save the life of the patient. But doctors do transcend

and think beyond this highest goal in the cases of Euthanasia, where we see a conflict of moral values, of saving life of patient, or to release all the pain and sufferings of the patient. The conflict of values gives rise to ethical dilemmas. The understanding of the need and importance of these ethical principles gradually broadens with the broadening of our canvas of understanding, development of our cognitive faculty of thinking and reflecting. This developing stage is the one where one can question the need, use and benefits of a particular norm for an individual, for a society or for a profession.

The question that becomes difficult to answer is that despite having all the mandatory rules and necessary ethical codes, why we meet up with unethical conduct in professional set up of any company/organization/institution. Every profession demands that work must be done with honesty and integrity, that is the reason certain norms become necessary to be maintained and followed for good governance, for smooth functioning of the profession at the level of the organization as a whole and also at the level of their employees as individual human beings. Every organization should adhere to some norms, codes of conduct, and set of guidelines to regulate the organization in a proper manner and evaluate the conduct of their employees. The formation of rules and codes of conduct consist of multiple layers, various aspectual elements. These multiple layers may include:

- The organization should work for the welfare of the society, thus any act that is not acceptable in the society would be prohibited by the organization.
- The formation of rules should also take into account zero or lesser amount of harm to the environment by any kind of activity.
- The formation of rules should not go against the good of their employees.
- The respect and dignity of each individual who is using the service of any organization should be the top most priority of all professions.

The unethical behaviour in any profession results when the above said conditions will not be met, that is, when it would cause harm to the environment, to the society, to the users, to the employees; and by bypassing all these above mentioned goals, if the organization would contemplate only in making personal profits. Thus certain sets of codes and principles are required in order to distinguish between right and wrong, to establish the values and goals of an organization. We will discuss some issues in the next section that can be termed as

unprofessional practices that are impediments for the development of an individual, of a profession, of the society, and of the nation as well.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What do you understand by 'Professionalism and Professional Ethics'?

2. What is the role of reflective morality in Applied Ethics?

19.4 CASE STUDIES

19.4.1 Data Breach

We are living in multiple worlds, one is the actual world which is out there for us, and another is the world of virtual reality which we have created for ourselves. In a virtual world, users provide all their information in order to avail the services provided by a particular platform. The moment we allow that platform to access all the information which is needed before login, it means that we trust that platform to be genuine. Along with the benefits we get from availing their services, our privacy always remains at risk. Despite the promises every company makes with the users, we experience the problem of data breach. What should be the ethical obligations and legal responsibilities to prevent these incidents and make the network more and more strong and secure?

The breach of data is, we can say, the breach of trust. All companies make a bond with their users by promising to provide values like accountability, cooperation, privacy and trust. We often come across the news of data breach; various companies, industries, and organizations suffer from the breach of data. Despite claims of providing the service with all these values, what causes the failure of all these values? The moral duty and responsibility in any profession demands the appropriateness of rules which is equivalent to their strict liability, but the problem is, we often experience a gap between what is being written as standard norms; and what is being followed on practical grounds. Talks about liability and accountability then seem redundant. The breach of data may happen in various ways. Some of these are:

- Making private information public.
- Leaking of information like email addresses, and phone numbers.
- Hackers hack the computer network, the system with the help of malware in order to get access to confidential information.

One weak point that makes it easier for the hackers to leak the data can be said the lack of knowledge of the users. The users allow access without knowing the cons of it, as a consequence they risk their privacy and security. But, even if the users remain at the vulnerable position due to lack of information; industries/organizations/companies must have the moral responsibility to take precautionary steps to keep the data of the user safe. The behaviour of companies has always been reactionary rather than precautionary. As a reaction the companies only inform their consumers about such incidents of breach, and that too can be delayed. Hacking is an illegal act. There are no set standards for these unethical issues in the cyber world which a professional ought to follow. There are only some guidelines that were created in 1992 as the ten commandments of computer ethics; but those do not match with today's scenario because these are quite vague in nature.

WikiLeaks is one such organization that has been known to release the documents to unveil many illegal acts. It has become a medium for many people to express their voices and uncover the questionable acts of the governments. However the sources from which these documents are obtained has always been in question.

Let us take one example of data breach here. The data of millions of users of several countries was leaked from a social networking site. This data included personal information of users like contact numbers, user id, date of birth, information of workplace and email addresses as well. All the data was published by a hacking forum on the dark web. The company denied that no such action is performed from our end, the data was old and already available publicly on the site so the data was scraped from there only. This data can be misused to make fraud calls, send spam emails, for phishing, and in many other kinds of frauds. Once again as a reaction, only after the data was leaked the company said that we will try to strengthen our security systems. The question is why no precautionary measures were taken by such a huge social networking site? Why the security was so weak that risked privacy of the users, as a result it made people lose their trust in that one particular company and made people skeptical in using other similar networking sites as well.

19.4.2 Ethical and Unethical Hacking

Ethical hacking is conducted in order to check the security of the computer systems. It is conducted by experts of the company. The aim of ethical hacking is to improve the level of security and access the vulnerability of the computer systems. Ethical hacking becomes a necessary exercise to keep the computer systems free of malwares by suggesting improvements and increasing security time to time.

Illegal or unethical hacking is not conducted with the permission of the company. The purpose of this hacking is to steal information and data. One cannot deny that both kinds of hacking require expertise in terms of the knowledge, in illegal hacking the hackers misuse their knowledge to perform a criminal act. This unethical hacking can be done for personal gains, or just for fun, to see the communication of people, to disclose the communication of other people; or one can do it for business, stealing and selling the data.

Corporate Frauds

This example is related to the corporate world. Corporate frauds are unethical acts performed by the company or any employee of the company. Let us suppose a fraud is done by a corporate company of computer service. The founder of this company creates several bank statements to inflate the profits and revenue that did not exist. This process of showing fake profits lasts for nine years. This fraud case also includes creating fake customers accounts to show the profits. The founder of the company maintains the record of fake employees and

withdraw large amount of money in the name of salary of the employees that did not exist at all, and the number of these fake employees are in thousands. The benefit of all this is shown in the increase in share prices of the company. This kind of fraud is an example of a big scam in the corporate world that can be termed an ethical crisis. As an effect it will badly affect the share market and audit firms. It also serves as a warning to the investors who invest money in any company without investigating much about the company.

These kinds of scam are clear example of conspiracy, forgery, and breach of trust that puts a question mark on the whole ethics of professionalism. It will also raise question on the disastrous system of accounting and accounting norms of a country. The increasing numbers of such frauds highlights the application of ethical codes and values and make us think again and again about our blind dependency on such professions. These crimes not only damage the image of the company but put down the image of the country as well. However government understands his responsibility and plays his role as it takes some strict actions to control such big frauds by introducing acts like Companies act in which strict rules are introduced to govern the corporate companies.

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is devised for business. This term mainly refers to the policies that make business more accountable and more responsible towards the society about the moral responsibility in any business. CSR makes a company work in the direction of enhancement of the society and environment. It is a concerned effort of companies to set moral standards. Companies implement the policies and practices created under CSR in order to influence the world in a positive manner and set a good image of the company. We can observe the impact of CSR in multi-directions. Various companies do think about improving the environment sustainability by taking steps such as implementing renewable energy resources, minimizing or eradicating child labor because it gives rise to unethical practices.

It is not to deny that in every profession, and in the corporate world we find certain set of norms and principles to run the profession smoothly and free of any obstacle. These codes of conduct can be traced back to the amalgamation of the fundamental principles of ethics which are named as the utilitarian principle of Mill and Bentham, or the non-consequentialism or deontological ethics of Immanuel Kant, or the virtue based ethics of Aristotle. The codes of conduct based on these principles generally include the following statements:

- One should always keep public good in mind.
- One should not use the knowledge and expertise to any kind of illegal gains.
- One should be courageous enough to fight against the corrupt elements in the system.
- One should be acquainted with the rights of a professional and should be able to exercise those rights.
- One should work for the betterment of the company and of the society on the larger level.*

All these codes are devised keeping in mind the concepts of honesty, loyalty, thinking of maximizing the betterment for all, to do the right thing and avoid the wrong, raising voice against the wrong acts. The crucial question is why there still exists a huge gap between what is conceptually accepted in all professions and what is practically implied. Why the adherence of virtues like truth, honesty, courage, temperance, modesty, righteousness, patience has become so difficult in our life? Where does the fault lies, in the individual, or in the structure of the society that the society trains every individual in such a way that everyone thinks only about his/her own benefits at the cost of harming other human beings, animals and environment. Why human beings have become so incapable of thinking over and above their personal gains? Why we are moving towards a human-centric, individual-centric world day by day, without any concern for the future generations, and for other species. We may always claim that there is no harm in thinking about and to act for personal gains that is how we will be able to secure the future of our next generations, but it can never allow us to use improper, illegal or unethical means to achieve those gains. It should not be exercised at the cost of harming others, or cheating others, or by doing any other act which cannot be called right on the ethical grounds; and which is not acceptable in the society.

Our ethical conducts are based on the values we acquire from different sources. In recent times a kind of decay has been observed in the value system of the society, we see many instances in our daily life where the declining of values can be observed clearly, e.g. not respecting elders, not following rules, and careless behaviour etc. That is the reason why more emphasis is being given on imparting value education as an essential element to students in schools and colleges because it has become the need of time. The nature of this

*Subramanian. R. (2017). Professional Ethics includes Human Values, Oxford University Press. P. 230.

value education should not be static, it should be dynamic enough so that it can give the freedom to think about other possibilities as well.

Whenever we talk about any ethical principle, we always speak in terms of the relation between self and the other. The very domain of ethics, the ethical space cannot exist in isolation. The notions of duty, right, responsibility all presuppose the notion of other because all these notions lie in the ethical space where without the idea of relation these terms will become meaningless. This other can be a human being, a group of people, any organization/company, or any other species or environment. The relation is obvious in any sub-category of ethics; professional ethics, too, functions on the notion of the relation between self and the other otherwise it will make no sense to talk about ethics in profession or in any other domain of ethics.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the difference between Ethical and Unethical hacking?

2. What is the role of the relation of self and the other in professional ethics?

19.5 LET US SUM UP

Professional ethics is an essential element for every profession. It provides certain codes of conduct for proper functioning of a profession. Apart from learning skills and acquiring practical training, ethical behaviour is equally necessary in every profession. Ethics in any profession is important in order to prevent the society from unethical and illegal activities like data breach and corporate frauds. The ethical codes and rules help a profession maintain a healthy image and this good image strengthens the profession. The ethical codes are based on the conventional ethical principles but the domain of applied ethics makes us think on these principles in a new way when we deal with any issue related to applied ethics. Different issues of different domains of applied ethics demand to think critically and reflectively considering the whole situation. Apart from reflective thinking on the problem, the codes of conduct of professional ethics will be actualized only after we will be able to understand the relatedness of self with the other. An ethical agent will always demand a coherent relation of self and other.

19.6 KEY WORDS

Professionalism: It is defined as the way one performs actions in profession. It includes practices, standards, values, skills, education, and training.

Professional Ethics: Professional ethics depicts and codifies certain ethical norms necessary for a specific profession. These norms may vary according to the type of profession, for example engineers possess different set of codes of conducts from those of medical associations.

Data Breach: When a company or any employee of the company attempts to leak the information and tries to make that information of the user of that company public then it is called breach of data.

19.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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19.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. The term professionalism stands for the way one performs actions in a profession. This way may include a bundle of things in itself, the practices, the standards, the values, skills, education, and training. A carpenter possesses good skills to do his job, but he has not taken any professional training to become a carpenter, so carpentry will be called a trade and not a profession. Professionalism requires mastery over the theoretical knowledge, but having only theoretical competence is not enough, a professional should be able to implement the theory into practice. Professional ethics codifies certain ethical norms necessary for a specific profession. These norms may vary according to different professions, like engineers will be having different codes of conducts from those of medical associations. We can say that more or less these norms are aimed towards the welfare of the common people, and the society.
2. Reflective morality does not deny principles of conventional morality but the ethical dilemmas of real life situations involve much more layers of complexities that make it too hard to resolve these dilemmas based on any single conventional principle. Applied ethics deals with these real life situations where we try to find out the moral permissibility of specific acts. It seems to be an important requirement to consider the conditions and circumstances in which an action has been performed or about to be performed before taking any decision about the rightness or wrongness of that action. It demands to think and reflect upon the whole situation. The issues and debates of applied ethics every time demand a critical analysis, and evaluation of our conventional moral principles. Being an integral element of philosophy, there always

remains a scope to reason, to think, to critically analyse and examine the customary and traditional set of principles, to question the eternal nature of these principles. This is how we move towards the path of reflective morality in order to test the effectiveness of the established moral rules, whenever it is required. Reflective morality only helps by presenting a better approach by adding some novel element or by subtracting the unnecessary element to resolve a particular issue.

Answer to check your progress II

1. Ethical hacking is conducted in order to check the security of the computer systems. It is conducted by experts of the company. The aim of ethical hacking is to improve the level of security and access the vulnerability of the computer systems. The purpose of it is to suggest improvement in the system and to increase the level of security. Unethical hacking is not conducted with the permission of the company. The purpose of this hacking is to steal information and data. This unethical hacking can be done for personal gains, or just for fun, to see the communication of people, to disclose the communication of other people; or one can do it for business, stealing and selling the data.
2. Any ethical principle or any sub-domain of ethics presupposes the relation between self and the other. The very sphere of ethics, the ethical space cannot exist in isolation. The notions of duty, right, responsibility all presuppose the notion of other because all these notions lie in the ethical space wherein without the idea of relation these terms will become meaningless. The codes of professional ethics will also become empty without considering this relation, transparency in work, work for the welfare of the organization, for the welfare of the society, all these includes the notion of other. This other can be a human being, a group of people, any organization/company, or any other species or environment.

UNIT 20 MEDIA AND CYBER ETHICS*

Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Ethical issues in Media and Cyberspace
- 20.3 Ethical Issues in Print Media
- 20.4 Ethical Issues in Electronic (television) Media
- 20.5 Ethical Issues in Cyberspace
- 20.6 Media, Justice and Society
- 20.7 Freedom of Press, Censorship and Laws
- 20.8 Let Us Sum up
- 20.9 Key Words
- 20.10 Further Readings and References
- 20.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

20.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit attempts to,

- explore all the fundamental ethical issues and debates pertaining to the media.
- explore the emerging concerns of cyber-space, which arose after the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

20.1 INTRODUCTION

*Mr. Mohammad Irshad, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi.

The term 'Media' has always been considered in a broader context and conceptual landscape. It includes newspapers, television, advertising, radio, telephone, magazine and internet. (Unit has considered the concept of 'media' in a far broader context instead of confining it to the conventional understanding of media.) Media is a major source to generate, sustain and disseminate information and knowledge, hence, it is conceived as a vital instrument to inform and educate people. It is a substantial epistemic unit of knowledge. It, therefore, has to play a critical function. It must neither peddle the propaganda nor work as a publicity machinery for government and corporate organisations. Humans, historically, have had started from print media, due to the upsurge of technological age, a unique and peculiar kind of media in the form of cyber and digital media came into effect. Quite recently in human history, we are considerably exposed to the abundance of information at an accelerating pace. It empirically becomes explicit; media has taken a leap into the digital world, which fundamentally differs from traditional print and electronic media. Digital media disseminates information more rapidly than any other forms of earlier media developed so far. It is easily accessible, cost-friendly and substantially reduces the distance of the world. It has changed the notion of space and time.

Media, irrefutably, has become a major and dominating source of our information. It, however, cannot be beyond ethical questioning. We must develop certain codes, principles, and rules to steer it in the right direction to actualise its real function of promoting accurate information to advance well-being in the society. It demands ethical investigation to bring authenticity, transparency and accountability. This chapter partly explores the nature and theories of media; however, it mainly caters to the normative accounts of media.

Media plays a key function of making people informed so that they can make more sound and rational decisions. Media persons shall not be neutral all the time, because sometimes an idea and opinion is innately irrational and rudimentary, therefore deserve to be ignored and rejected. Role of the media is not limited to just presenting the facts without locating them in a context to meaningfully inform people. Graham (1998, p. 162) argues "the purpose of serious news reports in the newspapers and on radio and television is not merely to recount what has happened, but to report events in a way that uncovers and explains their political, social and cultural significance."

Media has largely been discussed in the libertarian framework as a fourth pillar of democracy. It has certain liberties and justified duties to perform. Liberal framework in the

media aspires to hold the government accountable by substantially diminishing the intervention of government in all walks of life. More so, it does not allow the government to exercise authority to curtail the rights of people. Therefore, it speaks for autonomy, integrity, freedom to express and people's right to know. Human dignity and integrity have always been known to be unabated universal ethical values in libertarian framework of the media.

Media ethics attempts to address the ethical concerns encountered in the entire process and functioning of the media. In sum, much of what is discussed within media ethics is a debate on the function of the press and how best it can achieve this (Berry, 2008, p. 77). It is relatively a new discipline and pertains to a normative account of media, rather than limiting it to a descriptive one.

Media ethics is an applied area of ethics. Hence, we must see the application of basic ethical principles in practice. Being an applied discipline, it has huge social responsibility towards the society's welfare and well-being. There are a range of thinkers and ethicists, who have significantly pondered pressing ethical concerns in the media.

We as philosophers are in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (470 – 399 B.C.) brought ethics at the centre of human conduct. That was a remarkable shift from the natural philosophy of the pre-Socratic philosophers. For him, how to live a good, meaningful and worthy life was the major philosophical concern. Same concern could also be extended to the space of media, to understand what is required to advance the just and meaningful media. It is not the mere existence of the media is admired rather the values driven media is revered in any enlightened society.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is media ethics?

20.2 ETHICS OF MEDIA AND CYBERSPACE

Media ethics is a vast subject of study. From choosing a topic for journalistic endeavour to production of news to sharing/dissemination of news involves some pressing ethical concerns. Media people/communicators have to deal with the ethical concerns at every stage of content generation/story. Recently mass media has become a highly admired profession; therefore, the pertinent issues encountered by the media professionals invariably vary in nature. Incorporation of ethics in the entire functioning of media professionals can further advance authenticity, truthfulness, transparency and integrity. Media ethics is vital to give moral judgement about what piece of information is to be shared and or not. Merrill (1999, p. 5) says “Media ethics is a branch of philosophy seeking to help journalists and other media people determine how to behave in their work. In its practical application, it is very much a normative science of conduct, with conduct considered primarily self-determined, rational, and voluntary.”

On the other hand, Cyber ethics covers a wide range of issues that includes copyright, financial frauds, spam, patent protection, digital identities, digital self, online piracy, cyber theft, cyber threats, anonymity, explicit pornography, hate speech and getting the material downloaded from some unregistered sites bypassing the owner of the content. Oxford philosopher Luciano Floridi persuasively identifies the ethical problem of ‘entropy’ in the entire information sphere/infosphere. Information sphere is equivalent to cyberspace.

Kieran (1998, p. 3) argues “Whenever we are offered information, whether by newspapers, television, the Internet or any other source, we have no option but to use our everyday intelligence to assess it for reliability. This applies as much to a depiction as to a word or written text.”

20.3 ETHICAL ISSUES IN PRINT MEDIA

Print media conventionally known to be one of the most strongest and reliable means of communication. However, this may not remain true to this information age. Economic prospects in the media may stop authenticity and truth from becoming the main driver of its

functioning. Journalists who write the stories have to be transparent, objective and unbiased as professionals. They must take permission before getting the details of a person published in a story, exempting the cases of exposing corruption, duplicity and fraud.

Most of the journalists in print media to develop fresh and original stories/news do rely heavily on 'sources' whether the individuals, politicians, social activists, bureaucrats, lawyers, corporate leaders, office staff and many others personal reliable individuals to receive the knowledge. A considerable distance, nonetheless, must always be maintained from them to not let your stories be deflected by your emotional and friendly bond with them. Failure to do so may result in compromise on truth, honesty, impartiality and public interest, which are known as indubitable values of the media. It is important to produce a story, which in turn, empowers people and imparts right information to establish a well informed and knowledgeable society. Integrity and privacy of the other person must not be compromised during the generation and publication of a story to avoid tabloidization and sensational stories. Journalist ethics shall not permit them to present opinions and fictional stories under the garb of news.

The process of deciding to do a story, selecting what will be used, and expressing this material all impinge on ethics and affect the moral character of the media person (Merrill, 1999, p. 1). Print media has an active social role to play to provide truthful and authentic news. Mere existence of the media will not produce any good and meaning for us, as long as ethical standards are not exhibited in its practice. Ideological bias can stop the journalistic values like honesty and truth from taking the lead in the media.

Journalists have to fairly ask inconvenient questions to eliminate the social evils like caste system, religion, gender and sex based discrimination at every level, even within the institution of media. They shall not distort and misreport the fact intentionally; it may lead to disturbance and severe communal tension in the society. For example: A fake news by distorting facts and figures is promoted by person A belonging to a certain religion X, hurling abuses and dishonouring the other religion, however the fact of the matter is, Person A was drunk, broken and under the influence of alcohol and drugs behaving immorally, not intentionally. He was not in a normal and rational state of mind.

Responsibility of the ethical media is to present the news of person A by informing all the relevant facts about the concerned news, by ignoring the later part of Person A's story and

highlighting the fact that Person A was abusing the other religion X. Hiding of all relevant facts in a story/news can result in severe negative consequences for the society, it may most likely trigger tension and disharmony. This would be considered a case of unethical reporting in the print media.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What key issues are to be ethically taken care of by the journalists in any story of print media?

20.4 ETHICAL ISSUES IN ELECTRONIC (TELEVISION) MEDIA

Other than print media, people do heavily rely upon the electronic media to receive information about regional, state, national and international affairs. News travels faster in electronic media, whereas in print the medium speed of news is relatively slower. Electronic media could effectively reach out to those people who cannot read and write; therefore, spread as a more impactful medium of mass communication. Its audio-visual nature could cement it as a major tool to reach out to ordinary people. It, however, also brought considerable bias and manipulation of content, which partly resulted into the propaganda machinery for government, bureaucracy, and big business houses. People started to question its transparency and commitment to the larger cause of society. Corporate and big industrialists have seen a huge market in the media sector. As a result they have invested huge money to capitalise the noble field of journalism to develop it into a profit making industry. A moral trait is not innate and natural in humans as considered by Greek philosopher Aristotle. He effectively argued humans are capable of developing moral attitude

with constant habit of doing it rightly. If media does not deviate from the true ethical principles for a longer time, more often as a result, values would get easily be internalised in its organisational structure.

What is to be covered, broadcasted and illustrated through audio-visual graphics is a central part of major ethical concerns in electronic media. Electronic media also covers a great deal of ethical issues such as obscenity, vulgarity, casteism, racism, hate-mongering, explicit pornography, secrecy, privacy and homophobia. Sensationalism with the help of graphics can stop the true, authentic and meaningful stories from coming into existence. This, severely, undermines the people's right to know the truth.

Journalists are meant to provide the true information and to keep check on the political, social and economic structure of the society. They must always refrain from slandering people without trial because of their tilted ideological bias and favouritism. They have a huge responsibility of being the true conscience of the society to advance a just and egalitarian society. They are not legislators, executives and judicial authorities. If they resort to such activities, they can be termed as unethical.

Biased information telecasted by electronic media reached the masses, as a result an individual's integrity, modesty and privacy has to be extremely compromised. Such acts of media are counted unethical and unjust, hence, to be disapproved. Media must refrain from 'fake news' generation to gain monetary and political benefits with ulterior motives to please corporate giants and owner of media, who aspire to generate maximum monetary outcomes at the cost of truthful and transparent media.

A credible and responsible media does not deliver judgement before verifying and confirming the facts authentically as long as these are attested by official and credible record. Psychiatrists and media personnel can keep the secrecy of their 'sources' of information. However, in the democratic setup the media should not hide information to safeguard the government by violating the public's interest. Hacking, though widely regarded unethical, is also used as an ethical measure to expose the unjust practices. For example, in the early first decade of 21th century, founder of Wikileaks Julian Assange started to expose and reveal hidden information of public interest related politicians, big businesses and the government across the world, notably; it was used as a tool of activism to bring transparency, a large section of the media considered it ethical. Had Wikileaks exposed the personal data of

citizens by undermining the ‘right to privacy’ of people, it would have been naturally considered immoral for leaking the private information.

As the large part of the world, at the policy level, is shifting from socialist and welfare states to capitalist states. At the outset, we can’t afford to completely dismiss the introduction of corporate led media, the point is to convert it into value based and people centric media. Initially, there was no effective regulatory framework to make the media more accountable. Due to regular misuse, people are demanding to generate a more robust legal and ethical framework for media.

20.4.1 Political Agenda and Paid News

Political propaganda and paid news are telecasted without much clarification to gain the monetary benefits and to deceive the audience. This is done by politicians to win elections by manipulating the content, big business to establish the good reputation of the product, private companies to give false hope to people. It is subtly done and carried forward as news. Elections are the best times to manipulate the consent of people by presenting news in support of a particular party, its leaders and policies by projecting it as authentic and truthful news. It is done at the cost of the media's integrity and revered ‘fourth estate’ of any democracy. Advancement of such practices has a severe adverse impact on the health of the society and democracy in general. It conceals the true information from people and stops them from forming sound opinions about a particular subject, party and policy. Consumption of the tilted news will make the society weaker and hollow.

It becomes more problematic in a society where a large section of the people is unable to read and write. They believe ‘paid news’ to be as they lack the intellectual capacity to identify obnoxious and tilted news. On the contrary, in a society where more people are educated, there is a far greater chance that people may be able to locate the fake news to a considerable extent. An aware civil society can only be assumed where the majority of people are educated and learned, in such a setup, fake news and paid news will not flourish and circulation would be comparatively lesser. A pioneer of philosophy of technology, Andrew Feenberg (1999) argues for the democratisation of technology. ICTs generated cyberspace must be democratised to actually serve the cause of the people and to incorporate the diversity in the entire gleaning architecture of media. As McNair (1998, p. 49) puts it, “free from the gaze of

electronic media, politicians and other elite groups could pursue their business relatively free from journalistic intrusion.”

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What kinds of major ethical issues to be followed in electronic media? Explain

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20.5 ETHICAL ISSUES IN CYBERSPACE

In the technology driven age, the quantity of information has been piled up in the information society/infosphere. Discussion pertaining to the issues of quality and health of information has been side-lined to a great extent. Not long ago, cyber space in an earlier growing phase had offered space for conversation and meaningful information sharing; mere growth of the internet with minimal normative codes generated the scope for business enterprises to make hefty money that, in turn, started to pollute the quality of content. We have been exposed to more content/information in the entire human history. Quality of content, however, has been considerably compromised in cyberspace.

The Internet has become the major driver of our lives. It has become an intrinsic part of our quotidian existence and impacts our reception of news, music, sports, groceries, meeting places, paying of bills, relationships, travel tickets. Google Maps has been incorporated to find out ways and destinations as an extra reliable mechanism. Everything could be done by sitting at home without going into the physical world. Digital cyber space has secured its separate existence. Lessig (2006, p. 83) maintains “Cyberspace, by contrast, is not just about making life easier. It is about making life different, or perhaps better. It is about making a different (or second) life. It evokes, or calls to life, ways of interacting that were not possible before.”

Digital shift of the world has immensely altered the world. A galaxy of thinkers attempted to characterise and interpret newly emerged paradigm by giving different names such as ‘Consumer Society’, ‘Surveillance Society’, ‘Networked Society’, ‘Technological Society’, ‘Information Society’, ‘Post-Industrial Society’, ‘Media Age’, ‘Cyber Society’, ‘Knowledge Society’, ‘Borderless Society’ and ‘Post-Capitalist society.’ We can pragmatically decide to choose any appropriate word to refer to the new society.

Cyberspace transcends the physical boundaries. It carries a trans-national character and changed the traditional understanding of space and time. For example, #BlackLivesMatter movement received global attention and people started to express solidarity with the movement in different parts of the world with the help of cyberspace. A regional issue of racial discrimination can become an international issue with the power of new digital media. A government, despite having some legislation, can't limit an issue to a local level anymore to protect its fake image, practices and policies. Cyberspace, to a great degree, promotes transparency and global response to end innately evil and discriminatory practices, which was a major missing point even in the heyday of print and electronic media. This naturally generates the scope for global ethical principles in cyberspace due to irrelevance of regional and multi-national ethical conducts. But, the internet's potential ethical threat can't be completely undermined. All the nations must collectively work to develop some ethical regulations and codes for the advancement of cyberspace. It can no longer be addressed by countries separately.

Our focus is to understand ethical issues of cyber society/age. Ethics is about our moral conduct and behaviour in real life to flourish the well-being of each other in the society. We must extend this to cyber space to understand the ethical underpinnings of the same. In cyberspace hacking, piracy, copyright is unethical as these negative values snatch away the right of the owner to use and market the content, she has decided herself to utilise. A notable ethical philosopher of cyberspace Lawrence Lessig (2006) has identified law, code, norms and market as four major factors to develop the ethical discourse of cyberspace.

In a restructured state of current media, according to Shakuntala Das (2011) “local” will remain the defining feature of global ethical principle, she uses the term “glocal” as an epistemic category to understate the new world order and nature of the media. Global and local are not contradictory rather complementary to each other in new space. Global space of

media must be socially responsible to foster integrity, human dignity, impartiality, and respect to culture as a unit, non-violence and truth.

In cyberspace, the issue of misinformation, disinformation and fake news has emerged as a serious subject that needs to be discussed and reflected. The rampant misuse to tarnish the image of an individual, group of individuals, community, sect and institution has become a severely crucial subject in cyber-ethics. Hate speech, trolling, bullying, threats, anonymous identities, and provocation of violence are felicitated in cyberspace. 'Net Neutrality' and 'accessibility' of cyber space to all is a primitive requirement to the growth of a just and egalitarian society.

Spinello (2021) argues that net's code supports and protects a highly libertarian ethos that gives primacy to the individual speaker/user. Despite the fact that an individual is the central point of libertarianism, it shall not promote violence, hate speech and child pornography. A selective approach shall not be adopted to target people during the execution and implementation of the laws; otherwise the whole purpose of ethical codes and conducts becomes hollow and meaningless.

Freedom of speech shall not be weaponized to peddle unethical practices and corporate interest. A new trend is witnessed on various platforms of social media, under the garb of free speech people hurl abuses and use derogatory language against a person, group, community, caste, creed, culture and religion. This counts as the sheer misuse and misunderstanding of the free speech, this must certainly be penalised. It is only the legitimate criticism under the right to freedom of speech shall be justified within the boundaries of civility. Otherwise hate speech will soon be defined as a valid ethical practice and defined as an integral part of the freedom of speech. This will give rise to conflicts and uncivilised society based upon the traits of the barbaric and inhuman society.

Even online games which promotes violence as norm, discriminatory towards a sex, gender, community and country and projects them in a poor light shall be disallowed and dealt with a legal framework. Intellectual property rights and patents of anybody must not be honoured because they are the product of extensive intellectual labour, whether the original creation of a music piece, creative art works, books, articles and original ideas. It is the moral responsibility of users to give adequate respect and monetary benefits to owners of the content.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on key ethical principles of cyberspace.

20.6 MEDIA, JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

media must be maintained in terms of generating stories to include concerns and problems of the voiceless with more focus on marginal and vulnerable communities.

Whatever the differences of opinions within the broad scope of media ethics, all engage with liberalism, the idea of the fourth estate, and therefore the meaning of news and journalism and their relationship with democracy and society (Berry, 2008, p. 75). Communitarian approach in the media does argue that justice must be the central theme to keep society together. This approach promotes more harmony and peace, not individualistic greed of the people. This will nurture sound and lasting values of justice and peace in any democracy.

Check Your Progress V

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Could justice be eliminated from the discourse of Media ethics? Critically Evaluate

20.7 FREEDOM OF PRESS, CENSORSHIP AND LAWS

Freedom of press can't be considered as an absolute right if it puts the life and dignity of an individual at grave risk. Freedom comes with some responsibilities; it is not an absolute freedom. In any case, if it disturbs the people's safety and remains a threat to national security, then, in a fair way, partly censorship of the negative use of freedom of expression could be justified. Also if we honestly and fairly see it as an enabler and potential threat of disturbance, violence, violation of integrity and dignity of an individual, group and community, then it could be restricted, monitored and regulated. However, restriction shall not serve as a legitimate reason to curtail the genuine freedom of speech by citing the threat to national and public safety for gaining political benefits. Government must execute the laws impartially to serve them in the serious interest of the citizens, instead of misusing it against ordinary citizens, opposition, and civil rights activists to criminalize dissent and fair criticism. Indecency, vulgarity, profanity, obscenity and blasphemy must be forbidden in thoughtful free speech.

Press Council of India (2020) has given certain directions for the journalists to maintain accuracy and fairness by excluding paid news. Shakuntala put it (2008, p. 162) "the PCI code suggests that while freedom is key to ethical journalism, freedom alone cannot be a guarantor of responsible journalism and that a free press must function with restraint." Freedom of the media is to be exercised to promote social and public good. Social, political, and economic justice to uplift the oppressed section of the society must be a desired objective of the press. Freedom of press can't be indifferent to the principle of justice in organising affairs and practice.

Hutchins Commission (1947) had presented a remarkable report on *A Free and Responsible Press*, which is still referred to in the course of media for generating guiding principles of fair and ethical media. It advocated for social, political, economic responsibility and free inquiry. It was formed in the wake of World War II. Legal and ethical values are crucial for any civilised society. Dignity, reciprocity, equity and diversity must be guiding values required in the formation of laws and codes in media.

Check Your Progress VI

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Can 'freedom of expression' be considered an absolute right or not? Explain.

20.8 LET US SUM UP

It is a herculean task to provide any conclusive remarks about the codes and principles of the ethical structure of the media and cyberspace. Collective values, nonetheless, mentioned above could offer a more robust and divergent set of values to locate the ethics in the entire functioning of media to foster a just, impartial and egalitarian space of media and cyber world.

It could be easily be derived from the Unit that Race, caste, religion, gender, sex, and linguistic discrimination must not be given importance in the ethical framework of the media. To identify the distorted facts and fake news in cyberspace, independent fact checking websites are referred to. Adherence to discussed ethical values will certainly allow journalists/individuals in the media to truly honour the genuine cause of media, which is to inform and educate people with true and authentic information, so that they can make sound and rational decisions.

Without following ethical principles, most likely, a reliable and justifiable media will never come into existence and adversely harm the society. Despite having diverse frameworks of ethical values in media, there always remains enough scope to explore more and new frameworks and approaches to make the media and cyberspace sincerely ethical. Also the possibility for more sound and viable ethical principles, codes, rules and values in future can never be rejected, which can be incorporated in the discipline of media and cyber-ethics with great admiration.

20.9 KEY WORDS

Media Ethics: Media ethics as a separate discipline, which attempts to develop ethical codes, rules, and principles for the advancement of truthful, impartial and value-based media.

Cyberspace: Cyberspace came into existence after the advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Cyberspace could be known by various names such as digital space, information space, networked space etc.

Cyber-ethics: It aims at developing moral norms and standards for the digital/cyber space to generate a just and equal digital/cyber/information space.

20.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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20.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Media ethics is a broader subject. It aspires to evaluate the ethical functioning of the media. Ethics in media involved from the generation of news to dissemination of news. Media, being an important contributor to enhancing our information and knowledge, have some responsibilities; therefore some ethical standards are required to receive truthful and impartial news. It is an applied discipline; hence instead of elaborating on the conceptual nature of ethical codes, conducts and values, it is more devoted to practical significance and application of ethical theories in media. It further attempts to present a normative account of media, which can lay the ground for authentic, transparent and accountable media.

Check Your Progress II

1. Print media is one of the earliest forms of media. People still rely more on written words than electronic media and digital/cyber media. In print media, to become ethical, journalists must choose a relevant case/story, not an artificial one which may not be useful to people. Stories must be authentic and original. Journalists must refrain from distortion, misrepresentation and partiality while writing about the story/news. News must be impartial and truthful. All the used 'sources' for the generation of news must be verifiable and justified. News must be objective and transparent to present the true account of an event.

Check Your Progress III

1. In the electronic media issues related to false illustration of images, incorrect information, and distorted information are involved. Sometimes visuals are illusionary and journalists only present distorted visuals. It may have a negative impact on society. They could demean a person; race, sex, gender community and religion, therefore the content presented in the electronic media must more carefully be checked and executed.

Check Your Progress IV

1. There are a varied range of ethical issues in cyberspace. Some of them include intellectual property, piracy, hacking, copyright, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, patent, trolling, hate speech, digital divide and bullying. All forms of discriminations, accessibility and accountability in cyberspace are the essential parts and parcel of cyber-ethics discourse. Ethical issues are involved with the very design of technology which enabled the rise of cyberspace.

Check Your Progress V

1. Justice is the key part of social responsibility of the media. Ethics and justice are fundamentally connected with each other. Without justice and fairness, we can't honour the true cause and objective of the media, which is to bring the voice of neglected and vulnerable sections of the society into mainstream. If the media succeeds to actualise its objective by informing and educating people, it will inevitably help to develop a sustainable and just society.

Check Your Progress VI

1. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human value. Human beings are rational creatures; therefore, they always have opinions and ideas to share. They must be allowed to do so without any interruption. Though, it can't be absolute in order to sustain the society. Nobody shall be allowed to abuse and threaten the people by using freedom of expression as an instrument for negative purposes. Freedom must be given to express their honest, original ideas and to do legitimate criticism, but not at the cost of human dignity, integrity, community, gender, sect and religion. Recently a trend is witnessed across the world that governments misuse it to stop and punish dissenters in the society, who don't agree with

government's decisions and policies. Though, it is notable that freedom of expression can't be absolute and comes with certain necessary restrictions; this does not mean that rules are unjustly used to avoid criticism and questioning. Identification of intention in the freedom of expression is very crucial.

UNIT 21 MEDICAL ETHICS*

Structure

21.0 Objectives

21.1 Introduction

21.2 Important Approaches in Medical Ethics

21.3 Human Rights and Medical Ethics

21.4 Moral Values in Medical Ethics

21.5 Three Practical Cases in Medical Ethics

21.6 Conflicts among Moral Values

21.7 Let Us Sum Up

21.8 Key words

21.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of medical ethics is to provide ethical understandings to students in the field of medicine and clinical practices. Ethics deals with the right or wrong action in a particular circumstance by raising the question of “what should one do?” Medical ethics is a sub-discipline of ethics that helps the students to make the right decisions or choices within the limited field of medicine. Here, the main thing is to understand that ethics and its sub- disciplines start with the notion of the ‘other,’ and where the concept of “otherness” comes, there would be questions of right and wrong. Thus, this subject creates a platform for students to understand the ethical values and norms in the medical field.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

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Medical Ethics is a branch of applied ethics that deals with practical issues within the area of medicine and clinical practices. Medical research and clinical practices are integrated with ethics. Medical ethics is an important branch of medicine and clinical practices. As ethics plays a vital role in our day-to-day life. Every human being lives their life with their own choices and decisions. One always acts according to one's own choices and decisions. There is an interconnection between one's acts and choices. Ethics starts when human beings make choices and decisions to act. Thus, ethics deals with choices. Where there are no choices there is no role of ethics. There are some common questions that everybody thinks about such as: How can I live a good life? What is a way to live a good life? In a similar manner, medical ethics is a practical subject and also a branch of moral philosophy. Thus, Ethics is an integral part of medical ethics. It deals with those choices and decisions that are considered to act in the everyday medical practices. It is very clear that the purpose of ethics is not to decide what is right and wrong but to consider how we should act in a best manner in the light of our moral obligations and duties as a moral agent.

In addition, medical ethics and culture are connected to each other as different cultural values, and religious beliefs shape our decision-making capacity.

There are some best questions to understand the role of medical ethics in the healthcare domain. Firstly, what kind of relationship should be between a doctor and his patient? Secondly, how should we make decision about to end a life of a patient who is not able to make rational decision for own life? What would be the ethical role of family in making rational decision towards end-of -life issues?

21.2 IMPORTANT APPROACHES IN MEDICALETHICS

Ethics is not about applying a fixed set of rules in every ethical dilemma. In ethics, we can resolve ethical dilemmas only through understanding the nature of that problem. There are two important approaches that are applied in practical ethics, especially in resolving ethical dilemmas.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a traditional ethical theory that is advocated by two important philosophers of 18th& 19th century, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. This approach is based on the consequences of action or decisions. In this case, the good consequences of an action may justify the means of an action. The morality of utilitarianism approach does not lie with means but for this approach an end matters. In this context, an action is right if it produces happiness for a greater number of people. In other words, it can be understood that this approach advocates happiness for greater people and opposes those actions that cause harm or unhappiness for larger people. This theory is based on three principles-

- 1) Only pleasure or happiness bears intrinsic value.
- 2) The criterion of rightness and wrongness of an action depends upon the result of an action. If an action promotes happiness, then it is right. On the other hand, if an action promotes unhappiness or pain, then it is wrong.
- 3) In this approach, everyone's happiness has equal value. It does not mean that one's happiness has more value than another one.

This approach can be understood in the healthcare through some examples.

Deontology

This approach is defined by great German philosopher in the 18th century, Immanuel Kant. To understand this theory in the simple terms is that there is a moral relation between agent's duties or obligation and person's good will and it is based on the certain duties or obligations. This approach claims that an end cannot justify the means. Whereas, a good decision (duties or obligations) is the only way to justify the end of an action. In this approach, ethical decisions are independent of the outcomes. There are three important maxims given by Kant:

- 1) The Formula of Universal Law: "Act only according with that maxim through which you at the same time will and that it should become universal law."
- 2) The Humanity Formula: "So act that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means."
- 3) The Autonomy Principle: "A rational being must always regard himself as giving laws either as member or as sovereign in a kingdom of ends which is rendered possible by the freedom of will."

According to deontological theory, the rightness and wrongness of an action depend upon these three maxims. If an action satisfies these three maxims, then that action is morally right, if it does not satisfy then these three principles then it is morally wrong.

In medical ethics, these two approaches (utilitarianism and deontological) play an important role in the decision making. Kantian approach is very relevant in the medical ethics as we should respect autonomy and dignity of a person. Utilitarian approach is also important in the medical care because it gives us rational capacity to make decision for larger people or a whole society.

21.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND MEDICAL ETHICS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, has defined the concept of “human rights”. “Human Rights are rights inherent to all human beings.” Being a member of homo-sapiens species, it means that all human beings have equal human rights. According to United Nation, the definition of “Human Rights includes the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education.” In the case of medical ethics, every doctor has a duty to protect the patient’s human rights and human dignity. Each code and laws of medical ethics are dependent upon the protection of human rights. In medical ethics, there is special protection for human rights and preservation of life. The concept of human rights is related to that every human being is born to be free and all human beings are equal. Every human being is equal to each other in order to that they have equal moral worth irrespective of their caste, sex, religion, and birth place. It does not mean that one human being has more moral worth than other one. The concept of human rights provides a universal ground for medical ethics to treat patients equally and fairly. Thus, it is very clear that medical ethics is interconnected with the concept of human rights.

21.4 MORAL VALUES IN MEDICAL ETHICS

The ethical and moral problem in medical ethics is generally analyzed and resolved on the basis of “four principles.”* Those are autonomy, beneficence, maleficence and justice. On the basis of these four principles any action in the field of medicine is judged and evaluated

*These are postulated by famous bioethicists Tom Beauchamp and James Childress in their textbook *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*.

ethically. These four principles play an important role to make one rationally and ethically aware about the clinical research and medicine. In this context, Tom Beauchamp and James F. Childress, claims that no one principle can be important without the other. It means that these principals are equally important in the medical ethics. Here, the term “equally important” refers that there is no hierarchy among these principles to resolve moral conflict in the medical field.

21.4.1 Autonomy

The term autonomy is derived from two terms i.e. auto (means self) and nomos (means rule). In this way, autonomy means self-rule. Be autonomous means an individual have the freedom to decide or choose about personal life. “Autonomy” is a very important value in the medical domain because it is person’s or patient’s freedom to decide what to do with his/her life or how he/she wants to live. For example: a patient is free to make decision herself about her life without external influences. But the opposite side can be possible, what about those patients who do not have rational capacity to take own decisions for one’s life. In this case, they cannot make autonomous decision but they will be treated to their best interests. In the simple term, it is said that patient’s consent is must if patient is able to make rational choice or decision for his own life.

21.4.2 Beneficence

The second principle of medical ethics focuses upon other’s welfare or well-being of others. The purpose of this principle in medical ethics is to serve the best interests for others. For an instance: a doctor should act in the manner that action will promote the well-being of a patient. In this context, Beauchamp and Childress claim that there are two kinds of beneficence, positive beneficence and utility. Positive beneficence means to promote benefits in the interests of others. Utility means to weight the benefits and harm in the interests of others. If the degree of benefit is more than the harm then this principle is applicable. Thus, it is the core value of medical ethics.

21.4.3 Non-maleficence

In simple terms, the meaning of this value can be understood that an action should be done in this manner if it cannot promote the well-being of others then that action should not harm for

others. For example, a doctor should treat his patient with the intention of not harming his patient. A doctor should understand the risks and benefits in the case of patient's treatment. Benefits should outweigh the risks.

21.4.4 Justice

This principle is very essential in various fields such as medical, political, social, etc. The main concern of this principle is the distribution of scarce health resources. In medical ethics, the aim of this principle is to create fairness in the society regarding medical and clinical facilities.

These four moral values help us to make rational and moral decisions in the medical fields such as euthanasia, patient-doctor relationship, surrogacy, and so on. Here, only three topics of medical ethics (euthanasia, patient-doctor relationship, and surrogacy) will be considered for explanations. These principles may conflict with each other. One principle may override the other one. For instance: In the case of a person lacking mental capacity or premature baby, the beneficence principle may override the principle of autonomy.

Check your progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is medical ethics and its role?

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2. Explain the basic four principles of medical ethics that are given by bioethicists Tom Beauchamp and James Childress.

21.5 THREE PRACTICAL CASES IN MEDICALETHICS

In this section, three cases of medical ethics (These are the burning issues of medical context.) will be elaborated to understand the application of moral values and ethical theories that professionals refer to resolve the ethical dilemmas or conflicts. There are some important sets of values that should be focused in medical ethics such as respect for human rights, autonomy, beneficence, maleficence, justice, consent, privacy and confidentiality.

21.5.1 Euthanasia

The term “euthanasia” is derived from the Greek *euthanatos* meaning good or easy death. Euthanasia is an act to terminate a person’s life, who suffer from an incurable or extremely painful disease, without possibility of alleviation. There are two types of euthanasia: active and passive. Active euthanasia is an act to take patient’s life deliberately or voluntarily through medical assistance. Passive euthanasia is not an act to take a patient’s life with medical assistance but to withdraw all medical support of a patient and allow him/her to die. In the case of active euthanasia, a patient is provided all medical support to make him/her death as easy as possible. On the other hand, passive euthanasia is about withdrawing all medical assistance of a patient and the consequences of it will be the death. For instance- 1) in active euthanasia, a patient will be given an injection of over dose pain-killers and the result of it will be the death of the patient. 2) Passive euthanasia is to withdraw the oxygen support of a patient who keeps alive with the help of oxygen machine. It is an act of omission or withdrawing the treatment. But the question is which euthanasia is more immoral? Religious or traditional people think that passive euthanasia is morally better than active euthanasia. Some people think that active euthanasia is much better than passive because of giving easy death to a patient.

There are other three categories of euthanasia such as voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary. 1) **Voluntary euthanasia** involves the consent or wish of a patient to end his/her life. 2) **Non-Voluntary euthanasia** is a kind of euthanasia in which a patient is not able to give his consent such as when a person is in coma, a baby, or a mentally disturbed person. 3)

Involuntary euthanasia is a kind of euthanasia in which a patient wants to live but his/her life is terminated because of its worse situation. This issue is very debatable in bioethics. In some cases where a patient cannot give his consent then what would we say is it a murder or is it a beneficial act to give easy death to a patient? At what point could euthanasia be moral or immoral? The morality and immorality of euthanasia practice could be determined through various practices such as religion, cultural, moral values, law and scientific perspectives.

In some countries, it is legal such as Netherland. In other countries, it is illegal and immoral such as United Kingdom. There are some important questions on which we should reflect upon from the perspective of medical ethics. First, is it morally right to terminate the life of a patient who is suffering from unbearable pain and incurable disease without patient's consent? Second, on what basis would it be justifiable? Is there any difference between killing someone and letting someone die? Is it morally right to decide one's death? But what about those who do not have incurable and painful disease but they want to end their life? These all questions must be analyzed from the lenses of ethical theories and four moral values of medical ethics such as autonomy, beneficence, maleficence, and justice.

21.5.2 Doctor- Patient Relationship

The doctor-patient relationship is the central notion of medical ethics and healthcare issues. Medicine and the clinical research always depend upon the relationship of doctor and patient. Medicine and health care facilities are always meant for patients and medicine and health care facilities always work as a medium between doctor and patient relationship. A patient always must have confidence upon the doctor. All doctors should maintain **confidentiality** regarding their patients. Here, Confidentiality means doctor should protect the private information of a patient. Confidentiality is always based on loyalty and trust between a patient and a doctor. Any private information of a patient can be revealed only for the benefits of a patient if it is required for legal purpose. Medical ethics tries to resolve the moral disputes that arises from the relationship of doctor- patient relationship. In this relationship, the doctor's duty is to promote or improve the health of a patient. If the health care facilities and doctor's decisions are not able to promote the welfare (**i.e. beneficence principle**) of patient, then these all health care facilities and research will weaken the bond between doctor and patient. The decision of a doctor towards his/her patient should avoid the maleficence consequences. In this case, a doctor should act in a manner that patient will not

be harmed or patient's situation will not be worsened than before receiving the treatment (i.e. **Non-maleficence principle**). In the doctor-patient relationship, the application of last moral values i.e. justice is to promote the fairly distribution of scarce healthcare services among all patients. **Informed consent** is the central factor in ethical medical practices. The patient should be informed if there is any possibility of having risks during or after treatment. There should be an agreement between patient and doctor about the consequences of treatment that may create more problems for the patient. In this case, it is a patient's choice to go with that treatment or not. Because every patient has different choices and decisions about their health and life. Here, the principle "informed consent" refers to the respect for patient's **autonomy** and **human rights**.

21.5.3 Surrogacy

Surrogate Motherhood is a form of collaborative reproduction that typically involves three persons: a married infertile couple (the parents) and a surrogate mother. It is a fact that there are more heated views against commercial (money is involved) than non-commercial surrogacy (like as altruistic surrogacy). Some couples may take help this technique because for them pregnancy is dangerous or impossible from medical point of view. In some countries it is legal and in some countries it is illegal. Some ethical questions are raised regarding surrogacy such as commoditization of the child, affects the emotional attachment between the mother and the child, violate the natural process.

The roots of the many arguments depend on the harms that the practice is thought to produce. The methods of surrogacy harm women as well as child in various ways. These methods exploit vulnerable women who need money or who belong to poor family. In this case, a poor woman may become the victim of objectification by reducing them into 'women to fetal container,' 'womb for rent,' or 'reproductive machines.' There is possibility to create hierarchical divisions among women such as genetically superior women will beget embryos in vitro, strong bodied women will carry these "test-tube babies," and sweet tempered women will rear these newborns from infancy to adulthood. These divisions among women affect the inherent value of women, being an 'intended' mother or being a 'carried' mother or being a 'reared' mother and definitely will affect the child-mother relationship. Here, for example, a rich fertile woman uses another woman to undergo the risks and discomforts of pregnancy. Here, another question arises: Is it morally wrong to use another person as a 'means' to get a

child as the 'ends?' According to Deontological Approach in the medical ethics, rational human beings should be treated as 'ends' in themselves and not as a 'means' to something else. The fact that we are humans have equal inherent value in itself and equal human rights. In the case of commercial surrogacy, surrogate mothers are exploited and objectified. In India, commercial surrogacy is completely banned on the basis that a poor women is forced, and becomes the victim of objectification to earn money. Thus, commercial surrogacy seems the violation of human rights and autonomy of a surrogate mother as well as interference with nature.

21.6 CONFLICTS AMONG MORAL VALUES

There is a problem that sometimes one ethical principle or moral value cannot resolve an issue. The solution of the problem lies on the harmony among various principles of biomedical ethics. These principles play an important role in decision making to resolve the disputes of biomedical ethics. However, sometimes one moral value can come into conflict with other moral value. For instance, in the case of euthanasia, a patient's wish is to end the life. Here, a patient does not want to recover through treatment or medical help. On the other hand, a doctor wants to give treatment to patient with the intention of patient's welfare. Thus, there is a conflict between autonomy and beneficence. In this case, some societies prefer beneficence than autonomy. But, if we take the example of '*santhara*' (practice followed by Jainism) religious people may prioritize autonomy over beneficence. Thus, to resolve the conflict between moral principles also depends upon peoples' cultures, religions, and beliefs. Another important example to understand the conflict between two moral principles is commercial surrogacy. In India commercial surrogacy is banned because this practice is against the best interests (Beneficence) of a surrogate mother. Although a woman makes own decision or choice to be a surrogate mother. But, in this case, the principle of beneficence overrides the principle of autonomy. In third instance i.e. doctor-patient relationship, a doctor mostly prioritizes the autonomy of a patient over beneficence of a patient.

Thus, it is very difficult to follow a fixed set of rules in the medical ethics to resolve the situation. Various factors are to be considered to resolve ethical problems in the medical ethics such as respect for autonomy, beneficence, maleficence, justice, informed consent and confidentiality.

21.7 LET US SUM UP

Ethics is not about applying a fixed set of rules in every case. There is no fixed and single approach to resolve the ethical dilemmas of medical ethics. But ethics always follow a systematic approach to resolve ethical dilemmas. As in medical ethics, the doctor should respect the autonomy and dignity of the patient. Treatment should be just and fair. A patient should be informed clearly about his/her treatment. Clear understanding of moral values and principles are necessary to resolve ethical dilemmas such as utilitarianism, deontology, autonomy, informed consent, beneficence, maleficence, and justice. Religious and cultural views also play an important role in deciding how the moral problems can solve in medical ethics. A proper understanding of a culture is needed to resolve the ethical issues from that a person belongs. Thus, there is no perfect and single answer in the medical ethical. Here, the approach in the medical ethics is multi-facets and situational based.

Check your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Explain the understanding of Utilitarianism in medical ethics.

2. Explain the understanding of Deontology Theory in medical ethics.

3. “Medical ethics is not based on applying fixed set of rules but it is situational based”. Elaborate it with practical examples.

Check your Progress I

1. Medical ethics is an applied branch of ethics that deals with the practical issues of clinical medicine and scientific research. Its main aim to examine and analyze the practical issues from ethical and moral perspective. As ethics plays a vital role in our day-to-day life. Every human being lives their life with their own choices and decisions. One always acts according to one's own choices and decisions. There is an interconnection between one's acts and choices. Ethics starts when human beings make choices and decisions to act. Thus, ethics deals with choices. Where there are no choices there is no role of ethics. Examples of practical issues in clinical medicine and scientific research are euthanasia, doctor-patient relationship, surrogacy etc.
2. There are four basic principles in bioethics that are generally applied by bioethicists to evaluate and examine the merits and demerits of medical procedure. Ideally, in medical practices, an action would be ethical if it follows all four basic principles: autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence. Firstly, in clinical medicines "autonomy" means patient have freedom to make decision regarding health care. A Patient makes fully informed decision after having proper knowledge of risks and benefits of a medical procedure. No one can force and manipulate the patient. Secondly, "Beneficence" principle refers to any medical research or procedure should be for the welfare of society. It means a medical procedure would be ethical if it is beneficial for whole society not for personal benefits. Thirdly, "Non-Maleficence" principle refers to a procedure should be neutral if it is not beneficial at all. It should minimize the harm if it is beneficial for whole society or a patient. Fourthly, "Justice" principle refers to that every medical experiment or treatment must be distributed equally among all groups in society.
If any medical procedure or experiment follows the four principles then it would be ethical.

Check Your Progress II

1. There are two important ethical theories in medical ethics. One is utilitarianism and second one is Deontology. Utilitarianism is a traditional ethical theory that is advocated by two important philosophers of 18th& 19th century, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. This approach is based on the consequences of action or decisions. In this case, the good consequences of an action may justify the means of an action.

The morality of utilitarianism approach does not lie with means but for this approach an end matters. Thus, from this perspective, a medical treatment or experiment would be ethical if the result of that experiment promotes happiness or pleasure.

2. Deontology theory is defined by great German philosopher in the 18th century, Immanuel Kant. To understand this theory in the simple terms is that there is a moral relation between agent's duties or obligation and person's good will and it is based on the certain duties or obligations. This approach claims that an end cannot justify the means. Whereas, a good decision (duties or obligations) is the only way to justify the end of an action. In this approach, ethical decisions are independent of the outcomes. In medical ethics, an action or a practice would be ethical from deontological perspective if it follows three maxims of Kant: i) The Universal Principle

- ii) The Humanity Principle

- iii) The Autonomy Principle

3. Ethics is not about applying a fixed set of rules in every case. There is no fixed and single approach to resolve the ethical dilemmas of medical ethics. But ethics always follow a systematic approach to resolve ethical dilemmas. As in medical ethics, the doctor should respect the autonomy and dignity of the patient. Treatment should be just and fair. A patient should be informed clearly about his/her treatment. Clear understanding of moral values and principles are necessary to resolve ethical dilemmas such as utilitarianism, deontology, autonomy, informed consent, beneficence, maleficence, and justice. Religious and cultural views also play an important role in deciding how the moral problems can solve in medical ethics. A proper understanding of a culture is needed to resolve the ethical issues from that a person belongs. Thus, there is no perfect and single answer in the medical ethical. Here, the approach in the medical ethics is multi-facets and situational based.

UNIT 22 BUSINESS ETHICS*

Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Definition of Business Ethics
- 22.3 Aspects of Business Ethics
- 22.4 Characteristics of Business Ethics
- 22.5 Significance of Business Ethics
- 22.6 Factors Influencing Business Ethics
- 22.7 Application of Ethical Theories: Deontology, Consequentialism, Virtue Ethics
- 22.8 Role of Corporate Social Responsibility
- 22.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.10 Key Words
- 22.11 Further Readings and References
- 22.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

22.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit on Business Ethics are as follows:

- To understand and analyze what Business Ethics is.
- To examine the vital characteristics of Business ethics and ethical problems arising in a business organization.
- To discuss unethical business practices with examples and how through codes of business ethics the companies could avoid them.

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- To explain the nature, aspects and the growing importance of business ethics in today's economy.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

The term “ethics” has its roots in the word “ethos”, which means character. Ethics is a philosophical study of the codes of conduct which are believed to govern our actions. It has social acceptance which is said to evaluate the action as right or wrong. It is a critical reflection on what one does or why one does. When we talk about business, it is assumed that business is as old as human civilization and laws come into existence much later. Laws are basically formal codification of ethical conduct of the society. So, it is generally believed that the codes of ethics begin first when people began to live in groups. Thus, since beginning it may be said that the ethics continue to guide the mankind to follow the right path. Similarly the role of ethics has been a perpetual issue. Ethics plays a very crucial role and is an important aspect in how we do business. This is because ethical responsibilities in businesses helps us to understand and to establish rules, processes, practices and behaviors, that will be acceptable among employees, businessmen and management.

Ethics can be considered as a major concern for both large and small businesses because it is believed that an ethical code of conduct teaches the employees, businessmen about what is and what is not acceptable in a business. So here the role of business ethics will assist and guide in weighing the possible repercussion of our business actions and it will also educate us on how to draw moral distinctions and to resolve ethical dilemma(s).

Role of ethics has been gaining importance in recent times due to the growing size of businesses and due to the high impact and effect on the lives of millions of people. The aim and purpose of business is to earn profits and every business tries to maximize its profits. So here the ethical questions are: how much profit is to be earned and at what cost? What will be social impact of it? Will it be beneficial for the society? What are the importance ethical issues that we should keep in applying risk and benefit factor in a business? It is essential to keep in mind these questions because in a market place, beyond a certain point, one man's profit may result at the cost of loss to someone else. There are situations where there is a huge involvement of power, illegal practices in business to earn profit. At such times, the role of ethical code of conduct in business plays a very important role. A good responsible citizen

as a businessman is expected to limit his greed and not to involve in illegal or unethical practices which will harm the common people.

Let us take the example of two friends Raman and Satish. Raman and Satish are very good friends. They lived close by and studied in the same engineering college. They both started their IPO companies separately after doing jobs in MNC's for some years. In Raman's company, the IPO was heavily oversubscribed at the upper hand and if he wanted, he would have charged maximum amount from its subscribers. But in this situation, his management team decided to charge Rs.50 less than it could have. The company voluntarily decided not to take profit from its shareholders. But on the other hand, in Satish's company, the share prices were manipulated to almost twice its earlier prices and then sold at the maximum offering despite share prices have fallen at the time of actual allotment. Whatever Satish's management team did, can we ethical justify such act?

Here if we look at the contribution of Raman's Company towards society is really recommendable. Raman's company has no legal commitment to invest huge sums on esteemed centers like Hospitals, Institute of Social Sciences, and Fundamental Research Centres etc. But Raman does such noble work out of corporate ethics to support humanity and society.

In any business organization from top executive to bottom line employees, ethical conduct is very important. So it very important to make a balance between two things at the same time, that is high level of economic performance at one hand and to conduct ethical business at the other hand.

22.2 DEFINITION OF BUSINESS ETHICS

Business Ethics

There are different branches of applied ethics and business ethics is one of the important branches of applied ethics. Business ethics is a combination of two words-'Ethics and Business' which means application of ethics in business. It is the application of general ethical rules to business conduct and behavior. These are the rules of business by which business activities are judged. Business ethics is the organized applications of value in business and industry. Business ethics focuses on moral standard as they apply to business policies, institutions and behavior. It is the study of morally right or wrong action in business.

It states that business can make profits under ethical guidelines also. Today more and more interest and importance is being given to the application of ethical practices and ethical implications of business.

Business ethics is a kind of applied ethics that evaluates ethical principles and problems that arises in a business world. It is also called corporate ethics. Business ethics means to conduct business in order to give welfare to the society. So, it is the social and ethical responsibility that the businessmen must give a regular supply of good quality goods and services at reasonable prices to their consumers. It is important that they must avoid indulging in unfair trade practices like misleading advertisements, manipulating or fooling the consumers, black marketing etc. They must treat the workers or labors well and give fair wages and must provide good and a safe working condition. Any unfair means to earn profits must be avoided and they must pay all their taxes regularly to the government.

The three C's of Business ethics

A) Compliance: It include the following points:

- Moral Principles
- Laws
- Policies of the company

B) The Contribution: The following are the contribution that business should make towards the society:

- Quality of products/service
- Employment
- The core values
- Usefulness or utility of product

C) The Consequences of business activity:

- Social responsibility toward shareholders, bankers, employee and customers of organization.

- Good public image

Business ethics basically refer to the moral principles which are assumed to govern business activities. The purpose of business ethics is to lay down norms of behavior by the business.

For example:

1. To charge fair prices from the customers.
2. To pay taxes to the government on time.
3. To give fair treatment to the workers.
4. To earn reasonable profits.

Business ethics has grabbed attention due to the many scams and illegal business practices that has been exposed in recent times. In business ethics unethical behavior is not acceptable at any cost. It is very important for the business entity to ensure safety for the consumers and be ethical in business practices. The following are the two examples which show the unethical conduct on the part of business entities:

Metallic Mobile Company: A renowned mobile company named “Metallic Mobile Company” launched LOGO phones in 2010, was sold widely all over the world. But due to the worldwide reports of battery failure, heating issues, phone catching fire, thousands of LOGO mobiles was replaced by new safe phone by Metallic Mobile Company causing huge embarrassment and economic loss to the company. But the new safe phones were again found to have same problems with many customers reporting fire in the replacement phones. Many countries banned on carrying the LOGO phones on planes in checked-in baggage and in the hand baggage. Unable to fix the problem in the phone, the Metallic Mobile Company had to completely stop the sale of the phone across the world. The report suggested that Metallic Mobile Company had to take the loss of about 3.9 billion dollars due to this. Due to this technological failure to ensure safety of the product resulted in economic loss, loss of faith of consumers in Metallic Mobile Company products.

Better-Ride Cars pollution fraud case: Many models of Better-Ride cars were sold all over the world where Better-Ride car company claimed low pollution levels of diesel cars. But later on the Environmental Protection Agency limited (EPAL) found that nearly 540,000 Better-Ride cars sold had special software that was intended to avoid pollution level detection. This software enabled diesel engines in these cars to detect when they are being

tested and to change the engine performance according to improve the test results. Later on Better-Ride Car Company admitted that they cheated pollution tests using this software. This case again resulted in loss of consumer faith and confidence. EPAL also fined the company and a case against Better-Ride Car Company was settled for a penalty of 20.6 billion dollars for the pollution fraud.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What do you mean by 'business ethics'?

2. What is the role of business ethics in the society?

22.3 ASPECTS OF BUSINESS ETHICS

Let us now discuss the two aspects of business: Corporate Governance and Financial Reporting.

Corporate Governance

It basically deals with how businesses are conducted. It is based on ethical policies that are an essential framework of a good, successful business. For example, Mr. Ashok, an honest officer, in public works department, after taking voluntary retirement started a company

named 'Business Ascent' and with his hard work and dedication his company emerged as one of the best managed companies in late 1990s. His company adopted a very good corporate governance practices and performed better than those of many other companies. His company had actually maintained a high degree of transparency while disclosing information to stakeholders and in 2005 'Business Ascent' had been awarded the "National Award for Excellence in Corporate Governance" by the government. Some features related to good corporate governance are as follows:

- All business activities and practices must be based on corporate social responsibility. Making profits in businesses must not be only objectives in any business. It is important that that the corporate bodies must be aware of their responsibilities to the society. They must have basic concerns toward humanity. They have the responsibility towards public safety, public health and public welfare. Thus corporate governance must be concerned with major issues like health, human rights, environment etc, although they are not directly a part of business and they must contribute to sustainable development. This realization towards public good and environment is very important for doing good business.
- It is important for every corporate entity to formulate a code of ethics for ethical functioning of the organization. This must be known to all the clients, employees and stakeholders.
- Corporate governance must stand scrutiny in term of transparency in its dealings, business policies, plans and actions.
- Communication mechanisms and information must be available to all to the extent that it does not hamper business progress. This actually goes well with integrity of business practices and extracting unbiased loyalty from employees.
- The business must ensure principle of equity and justice to all those who are involved in business. This helps in promoting and enhancing dignity, credibility of corporate managements and groups.
- Corporate governance must always look for excellence and development through ethical conduct in this competitive world.

- Governing rules and regulations put forth by the government must be followed and respected by business entity. Any unethical conduct that will damage the image of business world and entity must be avoided at any cost.

22.3.1.1 Ethical Issues in Corporate Governance

Corporate governance is directly related and affects the market value and reputation of the company. So if the company has a poor governance policy, then it may result in reputational damage, loss of capital investment, fines to the organization. It is important that we avoid few common mistakes in corporate governance policies:

a) Insider Trading: Insider trading occurs when share are bought or sold on the basis of classified information. Insider trading is meant to buying or selling a security, on the basis of non-public information about the security. Insiders have an advantage over others investors in market in terms of knowledge, information, a privilege that they could take to gain profits in business. A lack of transparency in business activities may expose the company to penalties from regulatory governing agencies.

b) Over Boarding: The concept of ‘over boarding’ refers to director or executive who sits and works for multiple number of boards. This could lead to unrestricted time commitments and inability to fulfillment of their duties. Companies consider concerns about overcommitted directors and as a result policies must be adopted for limiting the number of boards on which their directors serve the organization.

22.3.2 Finance and Accounting

Ethics in accounting and finance practices is same as corporate governance. In accounting and finance practices also there are well formulated ethical rules and regulations. It comes into focus after scandal and scams related cases in IT and ITES Company. Let us consider fictitious examples related to scams and scandals: Swaraj Service limited, Jeevan-Kalyan Insurance loan scam. The Swaraj Service limited case showed a total failure where accounting malpractices was done to cover up the diversion of funds and embezzlement and profits was show where none existed. Such unethical practices in Swaraj case showed lacking of transparency in finance and accounting dealings. Jeevan-Kalyan loan scam is also another example where a lot of unethical practices like favoritism and bribery in financial dealings, disregard of rule of transparency by senior managers was reported.

The following are the important canons associated with finance and accounting practices:

- Businesses must follow the well laid-out norms for accounting practices.
- Transparency in accounting practice is important to follow and no attempt should be made to manipulate the accounts that will affect the financial health of the company.
- Business companies must follow well laid-out norms for reporting financial aspects during the annual general meeting (AGM).
- The expenses involved in businesses must be legitimate and there should be no fraud dealings that cannot be reported in the accounts.
- Financial audit has a great impact in the financial practices of company. It has a very crucial social responsibility as it give true information about the financial health of a company.

22.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF BUSINESS ETHICS

The following are the characteristics of business ethics:

Code of conduct: All businessmen must follow the code of conduct. It guide in telling what to do and what not to do for the welfare of the society.

Provides basic framework: Business ethics provides a basic framework for doing a successful business. It provides the social, cultural, economical and legal ground for conducting a business.

Based on social and moral values: Business ethics is based on social and moral values which includes self-control, consumer protection and welfare, integrity, service to society, fair treatment to social groups, no exploitation at workplace etc

Provide protection to social groups: Business ethics provides protection to social groups such as consumers, employees, small businessmen, government, stakeholders, shareholders etc.

Requires education and guidance: Education and guidance are necessary components in order to be acquainted with how to apply business ethics in their businesses. They must be aware of the advantages of business ethics.

Voluntary: Business ethics must be accepted and followed by the businessmen on their own. It must not be enforced by laws.

Respect for employees: It is very important that the owner of the organization must respect his employees. They must value their opinion, treat them with respect and make sure that their efforts are recognized and rewarded.

Relative term: Business ethics is a relative. It changes from one business to another business, from one country to another country, according to the need and requirement of the organization and business entity.

Integrity: Integrity in business organization is an important characteristic to perform regularly and for the healthy environment at workplace. This is because healthy competition is the start of success, management and delivery of good services to the public.

Society's Interests: The main motive of any business is to work toward the development and welfare of the society and public.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the importance of corporate governance in business world?

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2. What are the essential characteristics of business ethics?

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22.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF BUSINESS ETHICS

As it is clear from above the discussion that for a long term bases of businesses, the ethical ground is the very important. In fact many research finders have supported the famous saying:

“Good business ethics promotes good business”. Business ethics not only encourages professionals and professionalism in management but it also helps the businessmen in inculcating values in their lives and purify their inner self. The significance of business ethics are as follow:

A) Positive Consequences: Business with ethics always results in positive consequences. This is because when ethical conduct is followed in business then it build mutual trust, confidence in relationship, acceptance of rules and approval of the society.

B) Inner Satisfaction: In this world, every businessmen are seeking mental peace, self satisfaction, free from tension and anxiety. So it is believed that to attain mental satisfaction, only ethics can promote good business. It is also the social responsibility of the businessmen towards the society that they should not implement unethical conduct to earn profits in their businesses.

C) Goodwill of the Business Organization and Businessmen: Good ethical conduct will always promote the goodwill of both businesses as well as the businessmen. For a successful business, a good public image is important because once a business organization’s image is blemished it direct affect the sales, profits, image of the business.

D) Success and Development: Ethical environment in business ultimately lead to the development and success of business. It is because the sincere hardwork and honest effort of a person make a person moral and help them to achieve success in their efforts in business.

E) New Management: New ethical principles are needed in new management for overall development and honor of the organization.

F) Encourage and motivate others: It motivates and encourages other businessmen also to follow the path of ethical conduct if some businessmen have earned profits by following ethical principle. It also set examples for others also.

22.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN BUSINESS

The following are the factors that influence the decisions in business:

- 1. Leadership:** The role of leaders towards the achievement of common goal is very important. Leaders are mentor and model that guide, influence and motivate others to work under ethical principles. It is necessary for leaders to set a good examples and ethics in their conduct because where there are good leaders there will be good ethical practices in business.
- 2. Sustainable Development:** An organization must use natural resources wisely and should be ethical in its utilization. So the principle of sustainable development must be followed for the protection of resources for future generations.
- 3. Corporate Culture:** It is a combination of set of values, beliefs, goals, norms that prevail within an organization.
- 4. Strategy and performance:** To motivate and integrate ethical code of conduct into the business strategy, certain questions are always given priority in business, like What do we stand for? What is our aim and objective? What values should we follow for the welfare of the society?

22.7 APPLICATION OF ETHICAL THEORIES: DEONTOLOGY, CONSEQUENTIALISM AND VIRTUE ETHICS

Let us first very briefly recapitulate these three ethical theories one by one, (which have already been discussed in unit 1).

Deontology

The term deontology is said to be derived from Greek word “deon”, which means duty to do the right thing. Charlie Dunbar Broad defined this term as duty or obligatory actions. This theory is credited to Immanuel Kant (also known as Kantian theory). According to him an action is right, if it is done in accordance with the cardinal principles. So here actions have to be performed according to the duties that are prescribed to be ethical. For Kant, we have

duties to ourselves, as we rational beings and autonomous beings. For example: duties to help others, duty not harm others, duty to develop our talents etc. This theory also states that the motive and intention of an action is important and consequences or result of an action is not important. According to Kant Moral duties are defines categorical imperative. They are the commands that we impose on us as a rational beings.

Categorical Imperative is based on 3 principles or maxims

Act in such a manner that we can also will at the same time that it becomes a universal law.

Act in such a way that you always treat humanity.

Act like a law-making member of a kingdom of ends.

22.7.2 Consequentialism

According to this ethical theory, the consequence of an action decides whether the action is right or not. If the consequence of an action produces happiness or intrinsic good then that action is considered as right and if it produce pain then action is wrong.

They are of two types:

a. Ethical egoism: If the consequences of an action produces happiness of an individual then action is right.

b. Utilitarianism or Altruistic Hedonism: If the consequence of an action produces happiness for maximum number of people then action is right and if produce pain then it is a wrong action.

22.7.2.1 Utilitarianism

The term “utilitarianism” is said to be propounded by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. According to this theory, an action is right if it produces maximum happiness for the maximum number of people and an action is wrong if it produces pain. In this theory, consequence of an action is important, motive and intention are not important. For, Jeremy Bentham all kinds of happiness are qualitatively and quantitatively is same. But for J.S.Mill, there are two levels of happiness: Lower Level (bodily pleasure, momentary pleasure) and Higher level (contemplation, contentment, self-realization).

22.7.3 Virtue Ethics

Aristotle is considered as the most prominent philosopher of this ethical theory. This is one of the oldest theories where virtues are acquired habits that help us to lead a rational life. Virtues are defined as acquired habits to exhibit a proper balance between two extremes (excess and deficiency) of an action- finding a means between two extremes called *Golden means*. According to this theory, an action is right if what a virtuous person would have done in a similar situation. For example:

Virtue	Excess	Golden Mean	Deficient
Truthfulness	Revealing all in violation of fact and confidentiality	Necessary and sufficient , to proper person	Secretive
Courage	Bold	Firm and humble	Cowardice

22.7.4 Case Study

Let us consider a case to see how these ethical theories are useful in deciding what action is to be taken in a given situation:

Mr. Joseph is a successful businessman and his company named ‘JK Constructions’ got a project of dam construction on Neelkanth River. The salient features of the dam are as follows:

Benefits: Irrigation facility to 1200 villages, drinking water availability to 2450 villages, power generation of 1400 MW.

Download of the project: 120 villages submerged, 1500 families affected, 30,000 hectares of land submerged of which 14,585 hectares are forest land.

If we consider the various ethical theories to justify the construction of such mega project, we face many difficulties. If we consider duty ethics to justify the construction of such dam, then duty ethics does not help because both parties have duties to respect the right of others. If we consider this project from the utilitarianism point of view, there are plenty of benefits in terms of power generation, irrigation and drinking water. However, in this project the large

number of people will be displayed and they will be deprived of their livelihood. It will also cause damage to the ecosystem. While from the point of view of general public good, this project may be adopted and the issues of both rehabilitation efforts for people and efforts to minimize damage to the ecosystem must be taken up seriously and it should be completed also. If we consider this project from the point of view of rights theory, there is definitely a conflict of rights of those benefited and those affected. Morally, the project has a right to exist only when the rights of people affected are taken care of.

22.8 ROLE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility is basically related to operating a business in such a manner that accounts for the social and environmental impact created by the business. It is a commitment towards the responsible business practices with their impact on the society and to report on regular basis to show the progress made towards accomplishing business objectives. CSR reports cover a wide range of issues such as governance, worker safety and welfare, ethical conduct, purchase and supply chain operations, environmental impact, energy audit. Today CSR efforts also focus on social, economical and environmental sustainability. It is a kind of international private business self-regulation which aims to work towards the societal goals of a philanthropic, activist or charitable nature under ethically-oriented practices and conduct.

Types of Corporate Social Responsibility are as follows: environmental, philanthropic, ethical and economic responsibility.

1. Environmental Responsibility: According to this, the organization must work responsibly towards the environment following the principle of sustainable development. There are several ways to embrace this responsibility like reducing pollution, greenhouse effects, increasing reliance on renewable energy, sustainable resources etc

2. Ethical Responsibility: This aim to achieve fair treatment among all employees, stakeholders (includes leadership, suppliers, investors, manufacturers, customers). There should not be any discrimination at workplace on the bases of caste, creed, religion, nationality.

3. Philanthropic Responsibility: This responsibility aims to actively make the world and society a better place to live. It involves donating funds, good services to another organization.

4. Economic Responsibility: It is the practice towards the healthy finance of the organization. The end goal is to earn profits without unethical conduct.

Many industries all over the world are well aware of the importance of CSR. Many organizations have shown recommendable work in their performing their duties towards people, planet and profit.

Community Investment: Based on their heritage and business, the company focuses on the following major areas:

- Strengthening communities
- Improving opportunities for women and minorities
- Helping children and youth to utilize their potential.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What do you mean by corporate social responsibility?

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22.9 LET US SUM UP

Business ethics is an important branch of applied ethics where moral principles act as guidelines for business conduct and its transactions. The need of ethical conduct in every business is important because it help in earning profits under the ethical guidelines, keep workers safe, help trade and interactions between companies remain honest and safe and

generally promote principle of equity and fairness in businesses. The reason why business ethics is important can be seen every day on the news where a lot of business scams are heard on daily bases. In recent times we have seen that many corporations are held accountable for unethical and questionable behavior and their brand image is tarnished. So here business ethics enable us make responsible decisions towards public good, public health and public welfare. It helps us in maintaining dignity and honor of the business entity and organization. Business ethics is meant to protect the various social groups of consumers, employees, small businesses, governments, shareholders etc. in an organization. Business ethics provides a basic framework for business which works towards the social, economical, cultural, legal development of the society. Business is basically an organization that includes various social and economic rules and regulations. It covers a person's criteria and behavior guidelines, such as how to behave yourself, how to improve yourself, how to conduct ourselves in business decisions without compromising our core values in our life. Basically business ethics is not against making a real or fair profit. It is only against the profits that we attain through fraud and by cheating the consumers. It supports business activities through fair and legal ways.

22.10 KEY WORDS

Business Ethics: Business ethics is the study of how a business should be conducted under ethical and moral guidelines. It is the study ethical principles which help us in resolving ethical dilemmas and controversial situations in business activity.

Corporate Governance: Corporate governance can be defined as the combination of laws, rules, and operations, processes by which businesses are regulated, monitored, operated and controlled. It is concerned with how the governing board authority manages the business throughout the organization. It works for the benefit of every person that is involved directly or indirectly within the organization which ensures that the enterprise follow formal laws, ethical standards and reasonable and acceptable practices.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Corporate social responsibility is an important form of management concept whereby business organizations and companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. It is a company's commitment to responsibly manage the social, economical and environmental impact of its operations within the boundaries of public expectations. It

describes how a company gives back or improves the community. CSR is a very important factor in business world because it not only increases business, profits and revenue but they also promote change and progress throughout the world.

22.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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22.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. Business ethics can be defined as an ethical code of conduct and principles that govern decisions and actions within the business organization. In business world, the organization sets a standard of morality for guiding the actions and justifies the decisions in business. It examines ethical issues that may arise in the business environment.

2. The role of business ethics in society is very important for a variety of reasons. It keeps the business to work within the boundaries of the ethical conduct and laws. It also ensures that they aren't committing any crimes against their customers, stakeholders, employees, staffs, workers. It helps the business entity and businessmen to achieve success and earn profits in the society. Business ethics also build trust between the business companies and the consumers. Following ethical code of conduct in business is also highly appealing to investors and shareholders. High ethical performances by the employee not only help in

achieving profits but also attaining integrity as an individual. Overall, the role of business ethics plays a crucial role in achieving trustworthiness, respect, fairness and integrity among employees, workers, businessmen and consumers. The ethical conduct is not only important in business but also in all aspects of life. It is an essential part for the foundation of civilized society. A business or society that lacks ethical behavior is bound to fail sooner or later.

Check your progress II

1. The corporate governance is very important in business world because it plays a crucial and essential role in development and success of any organization. The good corporate governance practices offer many lessons to corporate world. It helps in increasing shareholder wealth and safeguarding the interests of other stakeholders. Corporate governance provides a well-defined and enforced structure that works for the benefit of employees, employers, customers under the guidance of ethical code of conduct. Without a good corporate governance, the financial health of any business organization could be damaged soon or later.

2. The essential characteristics of business ethics are as follows:

a. **Respect for employees:** A true and a good businessman recognizes his employees' contribution to the success and development of the business. b. **Core values:** Every organization has a set of ethical codes to achieve success in business and to enhance the image of business organization in public. c. **Integrity:** Integrity is very important to maintain both at personal and professional life. There will be a situation where you will be tempted to compromise your value for profit, but we should do just the opposite if we want to be an ethical businessman. d. **Safe working environment:** An ethical businessman must not only respect his employees but also provide a safe working environment for the people who work for them. e. **Voluntary:** The businessmen must follow business ethics voluntarily as self-love. It must not be compelled by law and force.

Check your progress III

1. Corporate social responsibility is an important concept in business world where companies merge social, moral, economical and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. It is the idea that a business has a responsibility towards the society. It is meant to protect the environment, to create a work environment that enhances employees' quality of life.

UNIT 23 WORK ETHICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Ethics at the workplace
- 23.3 A talk on Ethics
- 23.4 Vocabulary: Positive Qualities
- 23.5 Ethics and Etiquette on Social Media
- 23.6 Talking about Ethical and Unethical Practices
- 23.7 Improving Our Ethics
- 23.8 Summary
- 23.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

23.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will focus on the importance of ethics at the workplace. Here you will:

- Understand what work ethics are
- Understand the importance of following the Code of Conduct at your workplace
- Develop the right attitude towards your work
- Discuss examples of undesirable work ethics so as to avoid them

23.1 INTRODUCTIONS

Ethics has become an essential workplace function. In this unit, we shall explore the main reasons why ethics is important of companies, new business professionals as well as your personal life. By definition, business ethics reefers to the standards for morally right and wrong conduct in business. Legally of course, all organizations have a code of conduct, but “legal” and “ethical” aren’t necessarily the same. Ethics goes beyond the law by outlining acceptable behaviors beyond government/organisations’ control.

Today’s business professionals understand the link between business ethics and business success. Therefore, companies these days are insisting on high integrity and honesty for both employees and leaders. Another reason why business ethics is important is that it can improve profitability. Research has shown that business ethics is linked to customer loyalty. It cultivates trust, which strengthens branding and sales and hence profits. As there is also a growing scrutiny of business practices, it’s more important than ever for companies to carry out their work in the right way.

23.2 ETHICS AT THE WORKPLACE

Definition

A simple definition of ‘ethic’ would be a set of moral principles. The word derives from the Greek concept of ‘ethos’, which means ‘the characteristic spirit or attitudes of a community, people or system’, Work ethics would thus mean morality at work.

When you think of it, ethics at work should actually be no different from ethics in your private life. Ethics are thought of by many people as something that is related to the private side of life only. In some business, having ethics is frowned upon as a hurdle. This is because they believe that in business the focus needs to be on achieving success, not on what’s really the right thing to do. This is a short-sighted view, and success, in these cases, is transitory. For any business to sustain its credibility in the long run, practicing good business ethics is essential.

So how do we go about defining our ethics at work?

In business organizations work ethics are set by establishing a Code of Conduct. A Code of Conduct is a written collection of the rules, principles, values, behavior expectations, and interpersonal relations that form an organizations’s ethos and that enable it to stand out from similar organizations.

The Code of Conduct serves as a framework for ethic- making within an organization. It serves as a communication tool that informs internal and external stakeholders about what is valued by the organization and its employees. In essence, it is the heart and soul of a company. It is a mirror of an organization’s beliefs and how its employees view themselves and their relationship with each other and the rest of the world. The Code of Conduct paints a picture of how employees, customers, partners, and other stake holders can expect to be treated as a result.

How is ethics put into practice at the workplace?

Work ethics is a universal norm which makes us feel personally accountable and responsible for the work that we do. Basically, work ethics is usually associated with people who work hard and do a good job.

We can summarize the characteristics of work ethics under three major heads interpersonal skills, initiative, and being dependable.

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills include our habits, attitudes, manners, appearance, and behavior which informs our dealings with other people. This affects how we get along with other people. Our interpersonal skills begin to develop early in our lives. Our family, friends and our observation of our immediate world influence our attitudes and interpersonal skills. Television and movies

also have a role to play in shaping our interpersonal skills. Some of the interpersonal skills are also inherited. For instance, our appearance and our personalities are largely influenced by our genes.

In order to improve our interpersonal skills, we need to know people look at us. We may have habits or actions that we are unaware of and which may affect our interpersonal skills. Once we become aware of them, we can make a conscious effort to change and this would positively influence our relationship with people.

As adults we have the responsibility of improving our own interpersonal skills because these greatly influence our opportunities and success. This is because people make judgments about one another based on their relationships and interpersonal skills.

Initiative

Initiative is a very important characteristic in modern times. Direct supervision is often not a feature of the modern workplace. Without initiative, we may delay things and miss opportunities which can cause problems for us. And if our performance is poor, we may lose our job and may not get another chance to prove our worth.

This is most important for those who work out of a home office or have a small business. If they do not exercise initiative, there is no one to check it. This will lead to losses or reduced success.

Drive and effort are both components of initiative. Even if we are gifted, unless we work harder, longer and more efficiently than others we will never be the best. The amount of drive and effort we put forth in any of our professional or even leisure activities like sports would make the difference between average performance and high performance. In order to excel we need to have the right attitude, skill and the initiative to perform better than the others or better than before.

Being dependable

Being dependable is a highly valued quality in the modern workplace. This concept includes honesty, reliability, and being on time. People who are not dependable can cause extra expenditure, emergencies and wastage of time and resources. Sometimes lack of dependability can have serious consequences like losses of different kinds, even loss of life.

When asked to list the most important skills and characteristics they look for while hiring new employees, many employers have listed good communication skills, positive attitude, and ability to be dependable, punctual, and responsible. In addition to these characteristics, we also need some personal characteristics which include dressing properly, being polite, and displaying self-confidence.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Mark these statements true or false based on your understanding of the reading passage:

- i) There is really no difference between ethics at work or in office.
- ii) Some people believe that ethics are not important as they slow down their work.
- iii) A Code of Conduct is a written document that can tell you what moral standards the organization adheres to.
- iv) A Code of Conduct helps to establish work ethics in an organization.
- v) A Code of Conduct basically just helps only its employees to understand how the organization expects to treat them.

Check Your Progress 2

Now answer these questions:

- 1) How would you describe ‘work ethics’?

- 2) Which kind of worker would you say has good work ethics?

- 3) Which are the three major characteristics of work ethics?

- 4) Does our family or environment influence our interpersonal skills? How?

- 5) Why do you think interpersonal skills are important at the place of work? How can we improve our interpersonal skills?

23.3 A TALK ON ETHICS

Check Your Progress 3

You will now hear a talk on work ethics from an expert on the subject. Listen again to the talk and fill up the gaps in the text provided to you.

- 1) **Honesty and integrity:** The first principle of good behavior, at work and in personal life, is (i) _____. Be honest with yourself your co-workers and your superiors. Even customers feel comfortable doing business with a company they can (ii) _____, that adheres to moral and ethical principles.
- 2) **Keep an open mind:** Be ready to listen (iii) _____, criticism, (iv) _____ and new idea that can help you to perform better. This is very

important for (v) _____ improvement of any organization and its employees. Seeking opinions and feedback from both team members and superiors ensures continuous (vi) _____ and (vii) _____ and teaches you to value opinions other than your own.

- 3) **Honour commitments:** Be sure to honor all commitments and obligations, regardless of adverse circumstances. This is a certain way of (viii) _____ and (ix) _____ the trust of colleagues and customers. Remember that everyone's (x) _____ is as (xi) _____ as yours. By not honoring commitments, you may be hampering others from doing their work on time.
- 4) **Be Accountable:** To stay focused and committed, it is important to be accountable. Accountability helps you stay on your toes and put in your (xii) _____ (xiii) _____ at discharging your duties. Accept responsibility when things go wrong with work you have been involved in. Never shirk responsibility and lay the (xiv) _____ on (xv) _____
- 5) **Be Respectful:** Treat others with respect. Regardless of differences in position, age, or opinion, always treat others with professional (xvi) _____ and (xvii) _____
- 6) **Be a team player:** Remember that in order to achieve overall success, an organization must have high performance at every level, and by every employee. Be (xviii) _____ with what your colleagues are doing, without being (xix) _____. Help whenever help is needed. Everybody can have a bad day at work. Extend a helping hand to colleagues when needed.
- 7) **Be punctual:** Punctuality speaks volumes about your (xx) _____. Being punctual does not only mean that you need to reach office on time. This is a habit that must continue throughout your working day. Be sure to never be late for meetings, appointments, making calls at promised time, delivering material. Remember if you are late to a meeting you are not only wasting your own time but somebody else's too. If you are delayed unavoidably, be (xxi) _____ with your (xxii) _____

Let us understand how you can be ethical at the workplace. Tape script given at the end of the Unit.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Complete the web chart about 'Work Ethics' on the basis of the passage that you have read.

23.4 VOCABULARY: POSITIVE QUALITIES

Check Your Progress 5

Given below are some good work habits of some people. Match them with the words in the box.

self-confidence	hard work and effort
punctuality and regularity	suitable appearance
Good interpersonal skills	dependable

- i) Rama gets on well with the others in her office
- ii) You can give Tamanna any work and you can rest assured that it will be done.
- iii) Sameer takes a lot of interest to take on interesting projects and work on them. No one needs to tell him what to do next.....
- iv) Sally always comes on time. She is never missing from office.....
- v) Bipin always tries to listen to the other person’s point of view. Then he gently makes his point
- vi) Pavan may not be very bright but he works hard and sincerely at whatever job he has at hand
- vii) Mike comes very decently and smartly dressed to office. He looks so prim and proper.....
- viii) We all like the way Tasleen carries herself and interacts with people. She surely makes an impression

23.5 ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications which focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. Social media has become larger and more accessible thanks to access to mobile applications, with some examples of social media including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Printerest, Reddit, etc..

Many individuals will use social media to stay in touch and interact with friends and family, while others use it to communicate with different communities. Many businesses will use social media as a way to market and promote their products. In addition, business to consumer (B2C) websites includes social components, such as comment fields for users.

Types of Social Media

Here are some examples of popular social media:

Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

Twitter is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users’ tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.

Wikipedia is a free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; however, registration is not required to edit articles. Wikipedia was founded in January of 2001.

LinkedIn is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.

Reddit is a social news website and forum where stories are socially curated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, known as “subreddits”. Each subreddit has a specific topic such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members, also known as “redditors”. Submit content which is then voted upon by other members. The goal is to send well-regarded stories to the top of the site’s main thread page.

Pinterest is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions, but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take a user to the original source. For example, clicking on a picture of a pair of shoes might redirect users to a purchasing site and an image of blueberry pancakes might redirect to the recipe.

Social Media Etiquette

Social media is used by most of the people who have access to mobile phones, computer system, laptop etc., along with Internet connection. On this media people will post content, videos, photographs, tweet or like, retweet, comment, follow and unfollow. Mostly, there are no guiding rules since it’s all anonymous; however, various governments are trying to bring some of them. Social media etiquette refers to the guidelines that companies and individuals use to preserve their reputation online. As social media channels have evolved to become one of the primary ways people communicate in the modern world on a daily basis, typical social rules are finding their way into digital environments. Just as social etiquette suggests how people behave around others in the real world, social media etiquette revolves around online guidelines to follow. Some of them are listed below which suits for all kind of social media tools:

- **Post the relevant content keeping in mind, your audience:** The number one reason why most users find trouble in social media is because they fail to keep their audience in mind. By considering your audience, you should be able to identify what’s worth sharing or posting and what’s not.
- **Don’t need to share everything in social media:** You don’t have to post everything about your personal life and your day-today activities.
- **Build a reputable image:** It’s a good practice to examine your profile and identify what image you are portraying through your posts and shares.

- **Don't be overly promotional:** Try not to message all your customers asking them to buy your products and avoid sharing constant advertisements on your page. Make your social profiles a blend of promotional and valuable content.
- **Avoid over-automation:** While scheduling your posts in advance and automating analytics is helpful, don't automate everything. Some things still need a human touch.
- **Handle your hashtags carefully:** Avoid using too many hashtags at once. Even on Instagram, where you can use 30 hashtags in a single caption, it's important not to overdo it.
- **Don't bad-mouth your competition:** Don't be petty. Saying negative things about your competitors online will harm your reputation more than it hurts theirs.
- **Be authentic and genuine:** Don't try to be something you're not. Remember that your customers can learn whatever they need to know about your brand online today and things like authenticity can definitely go a long way.
- **Different Account for Business/personal use:** Business and pleasure do not mix in this medium.
- **Don't force to be Friends:** Don't approach strangers and ask them to be friends with you.
- **Take care of grammar and semantic aspects:** Compose your posts, updates or tweets in a word processing document so you can check grammar and spelling before you send them.
- **Don't show hatred' /post hatred message:** Social media should be a platform to initiate meaningful discussion and promote better communication. It's not the place to vent out your anger on something or someone. Don't add to its toxicity by trolling and spreading negativity.
- **Respect the opinions of others:** Accept the fact that not everyone has the same opinion as you do. However reasonable you believe your arguments to be you won't be able to convince everyone. Keep this in mind when you comment, post, or share anything on social media.
- **Don't spread/Share fake news:** While there is a lot of content online, it is your moral and social responsibility not to mislead others by spreading fake news. Always check your sources and be critical with what you read. Don't be easily fooled with unreliable information.
- **Say NO to cyber-bullying:** Every social media user should be responsible and mature enough to oppose and not be part of cyber-bullying. Always be sensitive when interacting with others in social media. Treat them as you would like to be treated.
- **Copyright Issues:** Give due credit to your sources. Social media is a wonderful place to share your work but be sure to ask permission and cite your sources when you material or content from others. Always give credit wherever it's due. Take care of the copyright and plagiarism issues.
- **Value Privacy:** Part of building a good reputation online is to keep anything personal private. Keeping your personal information safe will help protect you from online fraud and identity theft. Make use of the privacy settings of the social media channels you use. These settings are now more versatile and help keep your content secure.

23.6 TALKING ABOUT ETHICAL AND UNETHICAL PRACTICES

Check Your Progress 6

Listed below are some activities employees indulge in at work. Decide which of them are unethical. Discuss them with your friends and try to find a solution to these issues.

- An employee receives a gift from a company that his organization is negotiating a contract with.
- An employee is lagging behind with some urgent work. He takes the help of a colleague to finish it.
- An employee asks a fellow worker to punch his time card as he is running late.
- Using an organization's toll-free number, copier and office supplies for personal use.
- An employee is concerned about the wastage of electricity in office. He notices, for example, that co-workers leave the air conditioning on when they go out to lunch. He decides to talk about this to the management.
- Wasting company time.
- Not being honest with coworkers and managers.

23.7 IMPROVING OUR ETHICS

Check Your Progress 7

Here are some examples of bad work ethics that we encounter regularly in organizations everywhere. Now think of and list at least four more such examples. You can also search your memory for examples from your experiences in dealing with people from other organizations or even your own, where you think ethics have been compromised.

- An employee carries home stationery items such as pencils, erasers, and writing pads from office for his school-going children
- An employee surfs the Internet, shopping for personal items on company time.
- A plant manager decides to ship a product to a customer even though he knows some parts have a quality problem, hoping that the customer probably won't notice.
- An employee spends several hours a week on her phone talking with her children, their caregivers, and friends.

23.8 SUMMARY

In this unit we have shown you the importance of ethics at the workplace and in your personal life. Most offices have a code of conduct for employees to follow and employees should adhere to this diligently. We have given you several activities which will help you become a person who is aware of ethical at the workplace. Towards the end we had seen the social media, types of social media and etiquette to be followed while using them.

23.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) True or false
 - i) There is really no difference between ethics at work or in office. True.
 - ii) Some people believe that ethics are not important as they slow down their work. True
 - iii) A Code of Conduct is a written document that can tell you what moral standards the organization adheres to. True
 - iv) A Code of Conduct helps to establish work ethics in an organization. True
 - v) A Code of Conduct basically just helps only its employees to understand how the organization expects to treat them. **False- This holds true not only for employees, but also customers, partners and other stakeholders.**

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Work ethic is an attitude of determination and dedication toward one's job. It is the ability to maintain proper moral values within the workplace. This is an inherent attitude that an individual possesses which allows him/her to make decisions and perform their duties with positive moral values that include elements like integrity, responsibility, high quality, discipline, humility and teamwork.
- ii) A worker who has moral values, is punctual, hardworking, dependable, cooperative, looks for improvement in him/herself, takes initiative, is productive, and can work in a team, etc.
- iii) Having good interpersonal skills, being dependable and taking initiative for the good of the company.
- iv) Both play an equal part. A child's learning and socialization are most influenced by their family, since the family is the child's primary social group. Also, our genes affect our personality and appearance. Likewise, an individual's self-worth or self-image stems from their interaction with others. Mass and social media now play a great role as well.
- v) Interpersonal skills are the skills we use every day when we communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. They include a wide range of skills, such as building empathy, rapport and effective communication skills such as listening and speaking. Regardless of your industry, interpersonal skills are important because they help employees develop and foster strong working relationships with each other and with their colleagues and clients. Contribute to increasing team and organizational productivity.
- vi) Interpersonal communication involves exchanging ideas with others using various communication tools, such as words, gestures, voice tone, facial expression and body posture. Most of all, smile when interacting with others. Teach yourself to be positive by reminding yourself every day of the good things about your life and your job. Work isn't the place to be overly emotional but it is the place to build rapport. Be confident in expressing yourself. Always express yourself in a calm, patient manner. Appreciate team workers/colleagues and develop empathy for others.

Listening tape script: A Talk on Work Ethics

It is important to recognize the significance of work ethics as a tool for maintaining a favorable atmosphere at work and for achieving success. An organization that instills sound work ethics in its employees and keeps a keen eye on adherence to them can avoid many of the problems that ail inefficient, badly-run offices. Here are some key principles to keep in mind when establishing a Code of Conduct for your organization.

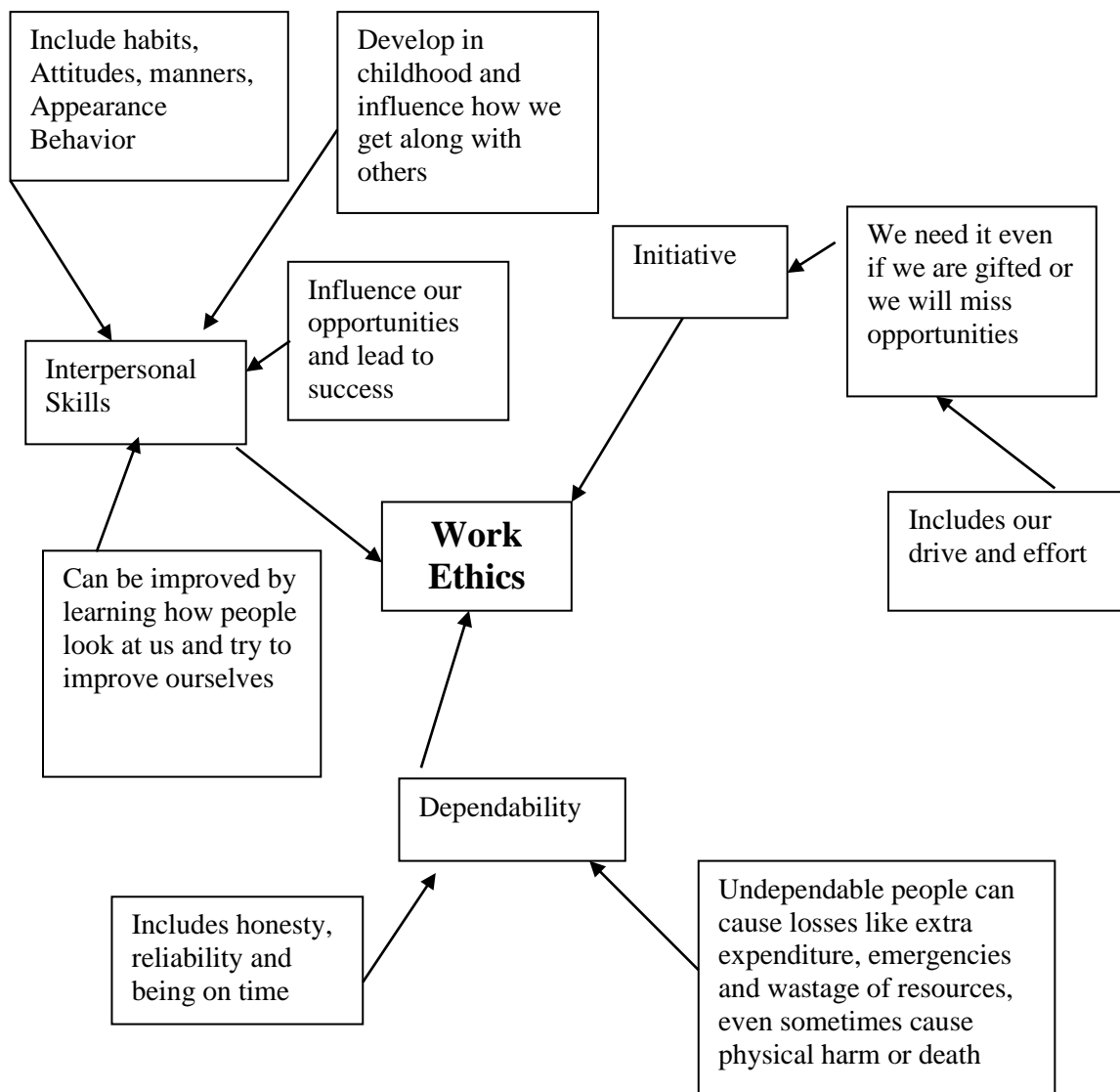
- 1) **Honesty and integrity:** The first principle of good behavior, at work and in personal life, is honesty. Be honest with yourself, your co-workers and your superiors. Even customers feel comfortable doing business with a company they can trust, that adheres to moral and ethical principles.
- 2) **Keep an open mind:** Be ready to listen to suggestions, criticism, advice and new ideas that can help you to perform better. This is very important for continuous improvement of any organization and its employees. Seeking opinions and feedback from both team members and superiors ensures continuous growth and improvement and teaches you to value opinions other than your own.
- 3) **Honor commitments:** Be sure to honor all commitments and obligations, regardless of adverse circumstances. This is a certain way of building and keeping the trust of colleagues and customers. Remember that everyone's time is as precious as yours. By not honoring commitments, you may be hampering others from doing their work on time.
- 4) **Be accountable:** To stay focused and committed. It is important to be accountable. Accountability helps you stay on your toes and put in your best efforts at discharging your duties. Accept responsibility when things go wrong with work you have been involved in. Never shirk responsibility and lay the blame on others.
- 5) **Be Respectful:** Treat others with respect. Regardless of differences in position, age, or opinion, always treat others with professional respect and courtesy.
- 6) **Be a team player:** Remember that in order to achieve overall success, an organization must have high performance at every level, and by every employee. Be involved with what your colleagues are doing, without being interfering. Help whenever help is needed. Everybody can have a bad day at work. Extend a helping hand to colleagues when needed.
- 7) **Be punctual:** Punctuality speaks volumes about your self-discipline. Being punctual does not only mean that you need to reach office on time. This is a habit that must continue throughout your working day. Be sure to never be late for meetings, appointments, making calls at promised time, delivering material. Remember if you are late to a meeting you are delayed unavoidably, be sincere with your apology.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) **Honesty and integrity:** The first principle of good behavior, at work and in personal life, is honesty. Be honest with yourself, your co-workers and your superiors. Even customers feel comfortable doing business with a company they can trust, that adheres to moral and ethical principles.
- 2) **Keep an open mind:** Be ready to listen to suggestions, criticism, advice and new ideas that can help you to perform better. This is very important for continuous improvement of any organization and its employees. Seeking opinions and feedback from both team members and superiors ensures continuous growth and improvement and teaches you to value opinions other than your own.
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- 7) **Be punctual:** Punctuality speaks volumes about your self-discipline. Being punctual does not only mean that you need to reach office on time. This is a habit that must continue throughout your working day. Be sure to never be late for meetings appointments, making calls at promised time, delivering material. Remember if you are late to a meeting you are not only wasting your own time but somebody else's too. If you are delayed unavoidably, be sincere with your apology.

Check Your Progress 4

Completed web chart about 'Work Ethics'.



Check Your Progress 5

- i) Rama gets on well with the others in her office. Good interpersonal skills
- ii) You can give Tamanna any work and you can rest assured that it will be done. Dependable
- iii) Sameer takes a lot of interest to take on interesting projects and work on them. No one needs to tell him what to do next. Initiative
- iv) Sally always comes on time. She is never missing from office Punctuality and regularity
- v) Bipin always tries to listen to the other persons's point of view. Then he gently makes his point. Right attitude
- vi) Pavan may not be very bright but he works hard and sincerely at whatever job he has at hand. Hard work and effort
- vii) Mike comes very decently and smartly dressed to office. He looks so prim and proper. Suitable appearance
- viii) We all like the way Tasleen carries herself and interacts with people. She surely makes an impression. Self-confidence.

Check Your Progress 6

Do it yourself

Check Your Progress 7

Here are some more such examples of bad work ethics:

- 1) A salesman gives false data on the number of sales calls he has made, while filling in his reimbursement form.
- 2) A manager shares important company information with a competitor for his potential gain.
- 3) A store misrepresents to its customers the quality or functionality of products it stocks.
- 4) An accountant tells a supplier that their “check is in the mail” when he knows he hasn’t written the check.
- 5) The supplies manager tells the customer his supplies have been dispatched when, in fact, they haven’t.

UNIT 24 COPYRIGHT AND PLAGIARISM

Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 A Brief History of Copyright
- 24.3 Evolution of Copyright Law in India
- 24.4 Who Owns a Copyright?
- 24.5 Economic, Moral and Other Such Rights
- 24.6 Plagiarism
- 24.7 What Needs to be Acknowledged?
- 24.8 Summary
- 24.9 Suggested Readings
- 24.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

24.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit is to:

- Explain basic principles of copyright
- Trace the history of copyright
- Explain the reasons why it is necessary to have copyright laws
- Define plagiarism
- Suggest ways of avoiding plagiarism

24.1 INTRODUCTION

Why do you think we have laws that prevent us from copying and sharing creative work? What would you consider as a creative work? How do these laws impact our daily life? What are the rules of copyright in the context of the internet which allows us such easy access to knowledge? Before we answer these questions let us give you a brief definition of copyright.

Copyright is a form of intellectual property law which protects original works of creators/ authors. These works include literary, musical and other artistic works (painting, drawing and

sculptor), advertisements, computer software, “Not all types of work can be copyrighted. A copyright does not protect ideas, discoveries, concepts, or theories. Brand names, logos, slogans, domain names, and titles also cannot be protected under copyright law. For an original work to be copyrighted, it has to be in tangible form. This means that any speech, discoveries, musical scores, or ideas have to be written down in physical form in order to be protected by copyright”(Kenton, 2020).

The Copyright law bears into nearly every facet of our lives, and as teachers it is our duty to inform you of these laws so that you are made aware of them and hence do not unwittingly violate them in your academic life. As students when we do our assignments, term papers or projects. We need to consult books articles or the internet. Whatever ideas or language you pick up, you must acknowledge these and, in that sense, copyright is a regular feature in our lives.

Why do we need to have copyright laws?

We list two reasons, though you could of course add some more:

Author’s right: Copyright protection serves to recognize and protect the rather intense connection authors have with the original work that they create. This rationale is founded upon ethical principles, which ensure recognition for authors and at the same time respects the integrity of creative works.

Utilitarian: Copyright laws provide some kind of inducement to authors/ creators. The aim is to encourage the creation and publication of new works for social benefits. Otherwise, many people may not put out their work in society if they got no acknowledgement for it or accrue no monetary benefit from it.

Interestingly, the Copyright law does not give creators of original material or their estate the exclusive right for eternity. This privilege is given to them for a certain amount of time after which the copyrighted item comes into public domain. Here one may not require permission to use their work, but we do require to acknowledge the authors. For example, when you quote a few lines from Wordsworth or Shakespeare, you need to say that you have done so.

Check your progress 1

- 1) If there were no copyright laws would you like to publish your original ideas. Give a reasoned answer.

.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) We have given you two reasons for the necessity of copyright laws? Can you suggest some more?

.....
.....
.....
.....

24.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF COPYRIGHT

The history of copyright protection actually emerged with the invention of the printing machine by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany around 1440 which made duplication of literary works possible by a mechanical process, therefore enabling with ease the copying of other's work. Earlier everything was written by hand, making any kind of duplication a very tedious process. Also, the handwriting would be different so it would be easy to catch the pretender. In 1483, Gutenberg's invention also reached the shores of England, and the then King of England, Richard III, lifted the ban on import of manuscripts and books from other countries. As a result, authors from all over Europe started sending their books to England for printing, which soon became the printing hub of Europe.

However, it was not until the eighteenth century (1710 to be exact) that the world's first copyright law was enacted in England. **The Statute of Anne**, as it was called, was "An act for the encouragement of learning, by vesting the copies of printed books in the authors or purchasers of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." This law gave book publishers fourteen years of legal protection during which time their books could not be copied by others. This act caused a huge shift in the way the copyright was viewed. It acknowledged the rights of authors of published work. This came to be known as the world's first copyright law. The prime objective of this act was: 1) to promote learning 2) to give authors protection against piracy of their creation. Since then, the scope of the rights granted under the copyright laws have greatly increased. Today, the copyright laws goes much beyond books, to cover nearly any original creative work.

Also, the duration of the exclusive rights has also expanded considerably and the law has been refined to bring more fair play to the creator of the work. Today, in most parts of the world, the minimum term of copyright protection granted to a work is the lifetime of the creator/ author plus 50 years after their death, or 50 years after publication, if it's a corporate.

Additionally, since the statute of Anne, copyright has become a matter of international law. The international community has signed treaties, which nearly all countries have joined. The result is that copyright laws have been the concern globally and these laws have similarities amongst different nations.

24.2.1 The Copyright Act, 1911

Before the Copyright Act of 1911, the books and literary works were protected under the Statute of Anne (1710), while the Engraving Copyright Act 1734 and the Fine Arts Copyright Act 1862 brought later, covered the other arts such as music, painting or sculpture.

The 1911 Act consolidated all the acts into one and also implemented the spirit of the Berne Convention. The Berne Convention, which was first accepted in Berne, Switzerland in 1889 was an international agreement about copyright amongst the nation states, and had far-reaching implications globally. The Copyright Act 1911, also known as the Imperial Copyright law in the UK as well as the countries under the British Empire. The act amended the existing UK copyright law, and repealed all previous copyright legislation in the UK. In India the act came into force on 30 October 1912 (some modifications in terms of its application to Indian law was enacted in 1914).

The main features of the copyright act are as follows:

- Copyright in the act of creation, an act of publishing.
- The term of Copyright was extended to the life of the author and 50 years beyond that.
- There was no need for prior registry in 'Register of Stationers' to receive protection under the act.
- Unpublished work was also covered under this Act.
- There would be swift remedy in case of infringement.
- The act would include all form of arts such as literature, painting, music, photography etc.

Subsequently, there have been several amendments to it, but the ball was set rolling with this Act of 1911. Also, though different countries have their own copyright law, they all show a great deal of similarities.

<https://certificates.creativecommons.org/cccertedu/chapter/2-1-copyright-basics/>

Check your progress 2

1) We have read about the disadvantages of the printing press. What do you think are the advantages?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What are the six main features of the Copyright Act, 1911?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Watch Copy's draw my life, where he sets out his history from birth till the Internet explosion.

#fix Copyright: Copy (aka copyright) Tells the story of His Life:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fdUDecJ6jc>

24.3 EVOLUTION OF COPYRIGHT LAW IN INDIA

Pre- Independence Copyright law in India

The Copyright Law of India was enacted by the British and like most of the acts of that time, it was an imitation of the English law. It was done by the British to ease the passage of literature from Britain over the subcontinent.

The first copyright act of India was enacted in 1847, during the regime of East India Company. As per the act, the term of copyright was either, for the lifetime of author plus 7 years or 42 years. The government had the power to grant the publishing license after the death of the author if the owner of the copyright came under the jurisdiction of the highest local civil court. This act was replaced by the copyright act of 1914 which is the precursor to the modern copyright law of today.

Post- Independence Copyright Law in India

The Copyright Act of 1957 came into being on the 21st of January, 1958 replacing the 1911 act. The act besides amending the copyright law also introduced important changes to the 1911 law. It had provisions for setting up copyright office under the control of Registrar of copyright for

registration of books and other works of art. It also established a copyright board to deal with the disputes relating to copyright. India also became a member of the Berne Convention and Universal Copyright Convention. The Government of India further aligned itself globally by passing the International Copyright Order, 1999. According to this Order, any work first published in any country that is a member of any of the above conventions is granted the same rights as if it were first published in India. The Copyright Act 1957 (the Act), supported by the Copyright Rules 1958 (the Rules) was substantially amended by the Copyright Act of 2012 (Singh,2020).

The Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2012 (2012 Amendment) came into force with the primary objective of establishing an equitable and just framework for administration of copyright and sharing of revenue to protect the rights of owners and authors incorporated in cinematography and audio recordings.

“The amendment of 2012 added to the burden with respect to “issuing or granting license” in respect to the above-mentioned works. Previously, the Copyright (Amendment) Act, 1994 added Section 33 (3A) was added, which laid down a new guideline that any copyright society carrying out the business of granting or issuing copyright licence must register itself again within the period of 12 months from the date of the amendment. Therefore, any copyright society which existed prior to the amendment has to re-register itself within the given time frame. Also, there was no punishment prescribed in case any copyright society fails to do so.”
Mr. Akash Gupta, Intern at Khurana & Khurana, Advocates and IP Attorney

11.3.1 “Work” protected in India

The Copyright Act 1957 (the Act), supported by the Copyright Rules 1958 (the rules), is the governing law for copyright protection in India. Substantial amendments were carried out to the Copyright Act in 2012 (Singh, 2020)

Under the Copyright Act, 1957 the term “work” includes any artistic work which could be a Literary creation, a painting, a piece of sculpture, a drawing (including a diagram, a map, a chart), an engraving, a photograph, a work of architecture or artistic craftsmanship, dramatic Work, and so on. A musical work, sound recording and cinematographic film would also come under its purview.

With the growth and development of Technology and specifically digitization, there was a requirement for a Digital Copyright Law, “Government of India in 1998 passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which updated copyright laws to address the realities of Digital Technology at present”(vedantayadav@lawtimesjournal.in).

However, it must be noted that not all types of work are subject to copyright. A copyright does not protect ideas, discoveries, concepts or theories. It also does not protect brand names, logos, slogans, domain names, and titles. For an original work to be copyrighted, it has to be in a tangible form. This means that any speech, discoveries, musical scores, or ideas have to be written down in physical form in order to be protected by copyright.

Copyright vs. Trademarks and Patents

There are other laws, such as trademarks, and patents which offer different forms of protection for intellectual property.

Trademark laws protect materials which include words, phrases, or symbols- such as logos, slogans, and brand names-which copyright laws do not cover. Patents cover inventions for a limited period of time. Patented materials include products such as industrial processes, machines, and so on

Check your progress 3

1) What are the works covered under copyright law?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Can you give examples of a type of work under each category?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3) What is the difference between copyright and trademarks and patents?

.....
.....
.....
.....

24.4 WHO OWNS A COPYRIGHT

While the copyright law gives the original creators certain exclusive rights, it also recognizes that users of the material have certain rights too and allows them to the some aspects of these works without the need for permission.

Typically, the first owner of a copyright will be the individual person that created a work. However, the exclusive rights granted by copyright can be transferred to others, including legal entities such as corporations, publishers or universities. Therefore, when we seek copyright permission, it is necessary to understand who has the authority to grant permission. It is important to note that the author of a work may not necessarily be the copyright holder.

For Example:

- In several countries the ‘works’ created in the course of employment are likely to be owned by the employer, though ownership rules vary by jurisdiction. Countries such as Australia and the United States for instance, adhere to some form of a doctrine commonly known as “work-for-hire”. If an employee creates a copyrightable work when employed, the employer is the owner of, and controls the economic right of the copyrighted work. In countries, such as France and Germany, the law presumes that copyright rests with the employee-author, unless an employment contract is drawn up differently.
- The case of freelance writers/ contractors is also not very clear. They may or may not own and control copyright in the works they create in that capacity. This solely depends on the terms of the contract between the contractor and the organization that engaged him/her to perform the work.
- Teachers, university faculty, and learners again may or may not own and control copyright in the works they create in those capacities. In open universities, for example, when materials are created by the teachers or course writers, the copyright rests with the university.
- In cases of co-authorship, where there is more than one author, all authors hold copyright. Joint ownership generally prohibits one author from exploiting a work without the consent of the others, though the United States may be an exception to this rule. If, on the other hand, an author has contributed to a collective work, such as an encyclopedia or an anthology, she/he is likely to own a copyright on their individual contribution.

As can be seen, ownership and control of rights afforded by copyright laws are complicated and vary by jurisdiction.

Check your progress 4

1) When is the copyright not the exclusive right of the author of the work? Discuss.

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24.5 ECONOMIC, MORAL AND OTHER SUCH RIGHTS

Most countries make a distinction between economic rights and moral rights. The World Intellectual Property Organization defines these in the following way:

Economic rights: These are rights that allow owners to get financial gain from the use of their works by others.

Moral rights: These rights permit authors/creators to take certain actions to preserve and protect their work. It rests on the principle that there is a deep link between the author and their works which must be respected and protected by law.

Let us look in detail at both these rights:

Economic rights: People who have created original works get copyright which allows them exclusive rights to control certain uses of their works. Different nations define these rights in different ways, but the exclusive rights in most countries include at least the following points:

- the right to make copies of their works
- the right to publicly perform, disseminate and communicate their works, including via broadcast and any other means
- the right to make translations of their works, as well as adaptations of it and to allow others to do so as well. For example, when authors give film rights of their novel to producers, or allow their work to be translated into other languages.

It is important to note that not all changes to an existing work create an adaptation. Generally, a modification rises to the level of an adaptation or ‘derivative’(as it is sometimes called) when it adds sufficient new creativity to be copyrightable, such as a translation of a novel from one language to another, the creation of a screenplay based on a novel, or the adaptation of a written work into Braille.

These adaptations are entitled to their own copyright, but that protection only applies to the new elements that are particular to the adaptation. For example, a translator has rights to the translated work. For example, if you use an English translation of a Premchand story, you need to also acknowledge the translator as well and make due payment if required.

However, there is an important difference between holding the copyright of a work and the rights that a user/reader has. For example, while the copyright owner owns the exclusive rights to make copies of her novel and gain financially from it, the person who has bought a physical copy of that novel, also has certain rights. She/he can lend it to a friend or sell it to an ‘old books’ bookstore, or even digitally to certain ‘buy back’ sites or donate it to a library. This is the reason why a library can loan physical works as many times as needed without having to ask permission or pay again for the works. This is very different from digital platforms which involve a subscription to the database or an e-book lending system, where users access to the same materials through payment again and again.

On the other hand, the fact that someone owns a physical work, doesn’t grant the owner of the object any copyright over the work. For example, if a museum owns a sculpture that is 1,000 years old, it doesn’t mean that they have any copyright on the sculpture. They are allowed to sell it, donate it, but they can’t control how others might make copies of the work, including taking photographs, making drawings or copies of the sculpture.

Moral rights

“It is important to note that moral rights are personal rights. This means that even as the author, you cannot assign your moral rights away. This is different to copyright, which can be assigned

or licensed to someone else, with the permission of the creator. For example, an author can assign the copyright of their book to a publisher. However, the author will continue to hold the moral rights in the book “<https://legalvision.com.au/what-are-a-copyright-owners-moral-rights/>. For example, a play of Shakespeare cannot be claimed by someone else nor can changes be made to it without acknowledgement to the original work.

Moral rights, therefore, require that the name of the author should always be acknowledged if you are quoting from their work. This is called **right of attribution**. For example, if you go to an art exhibition, you will see that the name of the artist is always mentioned next to the painting or sculptor. The same is true if a movie is adapted from a novel—the novelist name is boldly shown.

Moral rights also require that the work of any creator is not used in any way that destroys their reputation. **This is called right of integrity. This means that no one can change** any part of an original work without the author’s permission or destroy it without first asking if the creator wants to take it back or distort the meaning of the original work.

Adapted from <https://www.artslaw.com.au/legal/raw-law/what-are-moral-rights/>

Countries that recognize moral rights consider them so integral that in most cases even the creators of those works cannot waive away those rights. These rights last indefinitely, even when the economic rights on the work might have expired. Creative Common licenses and legal tools account for these rights.

Moral rights typically include the right to be recognized as the author of the work (known traditionally as the “right of paternity”), and the right to protect the work’s integrity (generally, the right to object to distortion of the work or the introduction of undesired changes to the work).

Check your progress 5

- 1) Say whether the following statements are true or false.
 - i) The authors of an original piece of work have complete legal and moral right over it.
 - ii) Authors have the right to get their work translated.
 - iii) The copyright of the translation also rests totally with the original author.
 - iv) Moral rights are traditionally known as the “right of paternity”.
 - v) Digital platforms have the same rights as copyright rules.

2) What is the difference between Economic Rights and Moral Rights?

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24.6 PLAGIARISM

However, despite these stringent copyright laws, plagiarism is rampant in schools and colleges. It is believed that universal access to Internet could be the main reason behind this decline in academic integrity, especially regarding plagiarism. We would like our students to lead ethical lives, so let us discuss ways to avoid plagiarism. We will discuss the different ways in which plagiarism commonly takes place and would like you to be conscious of it, so that you don't practice it in your life. Remember plagiarism constitutes serious misconduct and as students it is your duty to be aware of this and not be tempted to follow such practices no matter what the circumstances are.

There are many definitions of what of what constitutes plagiarism, however, according to research resources at plagiarism.org. some of these are:

- Submitting someone else's work as your own
- Copying words of ideas from someone else without giving this credit
- Failing to put a quote in quotation marks
- Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- Copying so many words or ideas from a particular source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

{adapted from Plagiarism.org 2006}

Plagiarism is derived from the Latin word "plagiarius" which means kidnaper. It is defined as "the passing off of another person's work as if it were one's own, by claiming credit for something that was actually done by someone else" { Wikipedia: Plagiarism 2006}

Plagiarism may not always be intentional—it can be unintentional or accidental and may even involve self-stealing. The broader categories of plagiarism include:

- Accidental this may be due to lack of knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism as well as faulty understanding of citation or referencing style being practiced at your university college
- Unintentional the available information is so vast and on repeated reading from different sources, these may influence our ideas and thoughts so deeply that sometimes unknowingly the same ideas may after a while seem like our own
- Intentional a deliberate act of copying complete or part of someone else's work without giving proper credit to the original creator

- Self plagiarism: using self-published work in some other form without referring to the original one.

[Wikipedia: Plagiarism 2006] [Beasley 2006]

There is a long list of plagiarism methods commonly in practice. Some of these methods include:

- Copy-paste: copying word to word textual content.
- Idea plagiarism: using similar concept or opinion which is not common knowledge.
- Paraphrasing: changing grammar, similar meaning words, re-ordering sentences in original work. Or restating same content in different words.
- Artistic plagiarism: using program code, algorithms, classes, or functions without permission or reference.
- Forgotten or expired links to resources: addition of quotations or reference marks but failing to provide information or up-to –date links to sources.
- No proper use of quotation marks: failing to identify exact parts of borrowed contents.
- Misinformation of references: adding references to incorrect or non-existing original sources.
- Translated plagiarism: cross language content translation and use without reference to original work.

www.wikipedia.com/wiki/plagiarism

Maurer H., Kappe F., Zaka B.

At college you are expected to refer to both secondary sources and of course the primary sources as well if you are quoting from a poem or a novel. The secondary sources include books, articles, websites, etc. When you use material from these sources you need to acknowledge the sources, usually by citing the author, the date of publication and sometimes even the page numbers. These are cited in your text as well as references at the end of your essay. Failure to acknowledge another’s work constitutes plagiarism which is a serious transgression and can lead to unpleasant penalties. Remember, when you cite sources correctly, you are not only acknowledging the originator of the language and ideas but also showing that you have researched extensively on the topic. It, in fact, shows that you are a diligent student. It of course gives information to your readers if they wish to consult those resources.

Sometimes students unintentionally plagiarize because they fail to recognize the necessary of attributing paraphrased, summarized, and borrowed ideas to their original owners. And indeed, it is sometimes difficult after days of research to know exactly what one has read repeatedly and what one has originally thought. A good thumb rule is, when in doubt, always acknowledge.

Check your progress 6

1) What is plagiarism?

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2) Is plagiarism always intentional?
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24.7 WHAT NEEDS TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED?

Things of common knowledge, each as the years when Indira Gandhi and Rajeev Gandhi were assassinated, facts that are generally known. Such as the discovery of penicillin and certain well-known quotations 'to be or not to be/That is the question'--- their sources need not be acknowledged. Of course, anything that you do in terms of surveys that you conduct, photographs that you click of interviews that you do is solely your work. Sometimes you may be confused about whether you need to seek permission. Always follow the dictum when in doubt, take permission. That way you will always be safe.

There are several ways in which you can cite your sources. Be consistent in citing your sources throughout your essay. Students sometimes mistakenly assume that plagiarizing occurs only when the exact words of the author are used without acknowledgement. As we have already mentioned, diverse other forms such as musical lyrics and compositions, visuals, ideas and statistics also need to be duly acknowledged. Therefore, keep in mind that you must acknowledge any borrowed information or ideas you use in your essay whether you have paraphrased, summarized or quoted directly from the source.

We must above all document electronic sources accurately and fully. Because it is so easy to cut and paste text and copy photographs from different sources from the internet, a lot of us forget to note down and acknowledge the sources, forgetting that electronic sources are easier to detect than printed texts and require acknowledgement in even more detail.

Check Your Progress?

Given below are two sets of original texts. Read the passages from the student essays and say whether there is plagiarism or not in them. Also explain why there is or is no plagiarism in each of the essays.

Text A

- 1) **From a lecture by John C. Bean:** Who among us begins writing an article by choosing a topic, narrowing it, and then writing a thesis statement and outline? Rather, most of us begin by being gradually drawn into a conversation about a question in our disciplines that doesn't yet seem resolved. We find something unsatisfying about this conversation something is missing. Whatever the source of our puzzlement, our own writing originates in our sense of a conflict or question.

From student's essay: Often, people view the writing process as a rigid series of steps. First, you choose a topic, and then you form a thesis. An outline precedes the first draft, revision succeeds the first draft and editing is always the final step. In practice, however, the writing process is not nearly so clear-cut. For instance, John C. Bean (1989) argues that writing often begins not with a thesis but with a question.

2) **From James L. Kinneavy, William McCleary, and Neil Nakadate's Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition:** The goal of learning to write "in the liberal arts tradition" is the well-rounded writer...a person with training and experience in a range of writing tasks, from term papers to poems and stories.

From a student's essay: The authors of Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition believe that "the goal of learning to write 'in the liberal arts tradition' is the well well-rounded writer". A well rounded writer, they explain is one with training and practice in a variety of writing tasks.

Task adapted from:

http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/class/sourcebk/frost3_sumframe.html

Task from BEGE 103

24.8 SUMMARY

As we have discussed in this unit. Copyright in some form or the other has been in existence for a really long time. It was in force in India since the time of the East India Company. However, even now, the copyright laws being modified from time to time to take care of the digital media as it keeps extending itself. Also, it is often difficult to tell what constitutes copyright infringement as it can sometimes be a subjective question. Thus, there is a need for more nuanced laws to lessen the subjectivity. But as students our duty is to always acknowledge sources where we take our material from. This is better for us because not only does it protect us from disciplinary action but also shows our teachers about the research we have conducted on a particular topic. It also enables us to share our readings with our, peers.

24.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Wikipedia

India: Copyright Law In India--- Everything You Must Know, 14 December 2017 by Vijay Pal Dalmia, Partner, Vaish Associates Advocates

<https://certificates.creativecommons.org/occertedu/chapter/2-1-copyright-basics>

<http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/class/spirceb/forost3sumframe.html>

<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/copyright.asp#:text=Copyright%20refers%20to%20the%20legal,right%20to%20reproduce%20the%20work>

<https://certificates.creativecommons.org/cccertedu/chapter/2-1-copyright-basics/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dfUDecJ6jc>

http://www.wipo.int/edoxs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_909_2016.pdf

<https://support.google.com/legal/answer/3463239?hl=en>

<https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html#:~:text=copyright%20is%20a%20firm%20of,both%20published%20and%20unpublished%20works>

<https://resources.library.lemoyne.edu/guides/academicintegrity/example-plagiarism#:~:text=Here%20are%20some%20examples%20of,the%20work%20as%20your%20own>

<http://www.sine.sunysb.edu/class/sourcebk/frost3sumframe.html>

24.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress 1

Do it yourself

Check your progress 2

- 1) The printing press is so significant that it has come to be known as one of the most important inventions of our time. It drastically changed the way society evolved. Knowledge is power, as the saying goes, and the invention of the mechanical movable type printing press helped disseminate knowledge wider and faster than ever before. This occurred because i) Printing reduced the cost of books; ii) The time and labour required to produce each book came down; iii) Multiple copies could be produced with great ease.
- 2) Six main features of the Copyright Act, 1911:

- Copyright in the act of creation, not the act of publishing.
- Extension of the term of copyright to life and 50 years.
- No need for prior registry in ‘Register of Stationers’ to receive protection under the act.
- Unpublished work is also entitled to protection.
- Summary remedies in suits of infringement.
- The act to include all form of arts such as literature, painting, music, photography etc.

Check your progress 3

- **Works**
 - Musical works
 - Artistic works or works of visual art
 - Dramatic works
 - Cinematographic works (including audio-visual works)
 - Translations, adaptations, arrangements of literary and artistic works
 - Databases
 - Computer software

(you can add some more)

- Do it yourself
- Although copyrights, trademarks, and patents are frequently used interchangeably, they offer different forms of protection for intellectual property. Trademark laws protect material that is used to distinguish an individual’s or corporation’s work from another entity. These materials include words, phrases, or symbols ---such as logos, slogans, and brand names--- which copyright laws do not cover. Patents cover inventions for a limited period of time. Patented materials include products such as industrial processes, machines, and chemical positions.

Check your progress 4

- Works created in the course of employment are likely to be owned by the employer, though ownership rules vary by jurisdiction
- The case of freelance writers/ contractors is also not very clear. They may or may not own and control copyright in the works they create in that capacity. This solely depends on the terms of the contract between the contractor and the organization that engaged him/ her to perform the work.
- Teachers, university faculty, and learners again may or may not own and control copyright in the works they create in those capacities. In open universities, for example, when materials are created by the teachers of course writers, the copyright tests with the university.
- In cases of co-authorship, where there is more than one author, all authors hold copyright an must take permission from their co-author before using the work.

Check your progress 5

- 1) True and false

- i) The authors of an original piece of work have complete legal and moral right over it. **F**
- ii) Authors have the right to get their work translated. **T**
- iii) The copyright of the translation also rests totally with the original author. **F**
- iv) Moral rights are traditionally known as the “right of paternity” .**T**
- v) Digital platforms have the same rights as copyright rules. **F**

2) **Economic rights:** These are rights that allow owners to get financial gain from the use of their works by others.

Moral Right: These rights permit creators to take certain actions to preserve and protect their deep link with their work. These rights cannot be assigned to others.

Check your progress 6

- 1) Plagiarism is derived from the Latin work “plagiarius” which means kidnapper. It’s defined as “the passing off of another person’s work as if it were one’s own, byclaiming credit for something that was actually done by someone else”
- 2) Sometimes students unintentionally plagiarize because they fail to recognize the necessity of attributing paraphrased, summarized, and borrowed ideas to their original owners. And indeed, it is sometimes difficult after days of research to know exactly what one has read repeatedly and what one has originally thought. A good thumb rule is, when in doubt, always acknowledge.

Check your progress 7

Do it yourself