

Applied Ethics: It's Nature and Methods

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Abstract

Applied Ethics is a branch of ethics devoted to the treatment of moral problems, practices and policies in personal life, professions, technology and Government. Traditional Ethical theory mainly deals with theoretical problems such as, the development of a general criterion of rightness but Applied Ethics concentrate on the burning issues or practical problems of our society. Subjects that are discussed in Applied Ethics are Environmental Ethics, Care Ethics, Media Ethics etc. Ethics help us in over all development of personality and Applied Ethics prepares ourselves for taking a moral decision in a particular situation.

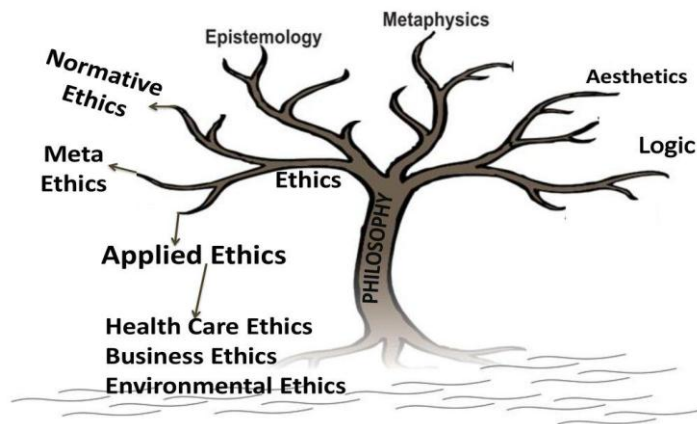
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Introduction:

In our Vedas, Upanishads, Epics and Puranas the supreme values are quoted as 'Satyam' , 'Shivam' and 'Sundaram'. It simply means 'Truth', 'Good' and 'Beauty' or 'Beautiness'. These are the core values from where Logic, Ethics and Aesthetics. Three branches of philosophy has created.

'Logic' is such a philosophical study which deals with 'satyam' or 'truth'. It assesses the logical progression from premises to conclusions based solely on the structure of arguments, regardless of their subject matter or specific details. 'Ethics' concerns about 'shivam' or 'good'. It's the field of study concerned with ethical principles.. Aesthetic is the branch of philosophy that discuss about or Concentrate on 'sundaram' or 'beauty'. It encompasses the principles of aesthetic beauty and artistic taste.

We will easily understand these branches of philosophy by using a picture -



Ethics is such a philosophical discipline where voluntary action of a civilized man is judged whether that is morally right or wrong and fair or unfair. Here voluntary action means an action that is under the control of one's will e.g. Dancing, Eating, Writing etc. An involuntary action is not under the control of one's will. It is controlled by the spinal cord e.g. breathing, Respiration, Blinking eyelids, Snoring etc. We cannot judge the action of a person as right or wrong because he or she is not socially, culturally or morally advanced and not suitable for a well developed peaceful society where people are treated fairly.

In Ethics, the concept of fairness involves treating everyone equally and impartially. Actually fairness is the product of moral judgement the process by which people determine what is morally wrong. 'Moral' comes from the Latin word 'Mores' which means customs or habits. The moral of a story is supposed to teach you how to be a better person. If moral is used as an objective, it means good, or ethical. Strong moral character often aligns with being a positive contributor to society. 'Immoral' is just the opposite of moral. It connotes the intent of evilness or wrong doing e.g. stealing, lying etc.

Now, we are going to discuss about the etymological meaning of the word 'Ethics'. The term 'Ethics' originates from the Greek word 'Ethos,' signifying 'way of living.' Ethics scrutinizes the logical rationale behind our moral assessments. In a broader sense Ethics reflects on human beings and their interaction with nature and with other humans.. Ethical principles are based on the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, fairness and justice.

Why is Ethics important in our life?

Ethics are fundamental in shaping interactions and decisions, guiding behavior through moral principles. These principles define concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, fairness, and justice. They influence how people interact with each other and the world. Ethics determine the standards for acceptable conduct, fostering trust and cooperation. By adhering to ethical guidelines, individuals contribute to a just and equitable society. Understanding and applying ethical principles helps navigate complex situations, ensuring decisions and actions are morally sound. Ultimately, ethics are essential for maintaining integrity and fostering positive relationships within communities and the broader world.

Ethics is traditionally sub-divided into three branches.such as:

1. Normative Ethics
2. Meta Ethics
3. Applied Ethics

Normative Ethics:

Normative Ethics are basically the guidelines we use to live our lives.They help us determine what is right and wrong,and they shape our decision making.It deals with norms that how one should act and behave in society,without norms it would be difficult for people to live together.It is focused on the creation of theories that provides general moral rules for governing our behaviour such as Utilitarianism or Kantian Ethics.The central question of Normative Ethics is determining how basic moral standards are arrived at and justified. Normative theory encompasses crafting moral guidelines with direct consequences for human actions, institutions, and lifestyles. Its core premise is that there exists a singular ultimate standard for moral behavior, be it a solitary rule or a collection of principles.

Normative Ethicists are treated like a referee who sets up the rules governing how the game is played rather than being a football player.

Meta Ethics:

Meta Ethics is a branch of analytic philosophy that explores the status,foundations and scope of moral values, properties and words. Actually Meta Ethics is the study of how we engage in Ethics.It doesn't propound any moral principles or goal for action. Meta Ethics asks the following questions like right, wrong,good and bad.It is an abstract way of thinking about Ethics. Meta ethics delves into non-moral inquiries concerning the nature of morality itself. For example,

- 1) What do moral terms like good and right mean?
- 2) Are moral judgments beliefs? Beliefs can be true or false? Can moral judgements be true or false?
- 3) How we are motivated to behave morally?

The Meta ethicist has a role more similar to a commentator rather than to a referee or player.They judges and comments on how the ethical game is being played rather than advancing practical arguments or kicking the football themselves.They also can comment on the meaning and appropriateness of ethical language just like a football commentator who can remark on the appropriateness of particular tactics or set-piece routines.

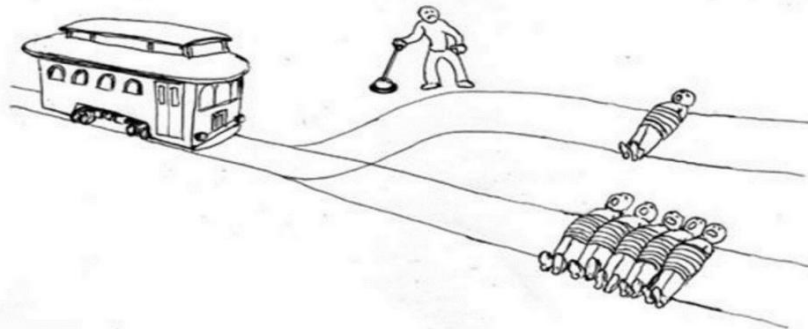
Applied Ethics:

Applied ethics is a new branch of ethics which always try to solve the practical problems of our life. Applied Ethics also called Practical Ethics.It is the study of how we should act in specific areas of our lives and how we should deal with the burning issues of our society like ; Euthanasia, Abortion, Surrogacy,child labour,stealing, etc.

Applied Ethics discuss about the topics like:

- a) Media Ethics
- b) Care Ethics
- c) Environmental Ethics
- d) Business Ethics
- e) Bio-ethics
- f) Organizational Ethics
- g) Social Ethics
- h) Censorship

Applied ethics allow us to take this kind of decision by special understanding. we can show it by a picture also.



Traditional ethicists tell not to harm anybody's life in any situation sometimes in a special case when a train is derailed our heart wants to save everyone's life but we compel to injure one people's life to save all passengers from a major accident.

We can use an analogy to understand the function of applied ethics properly. Drawing from the football analogy, the applied ethicist maneuvers the philosophical football akin to a player on the field. A proficient applied ethicist can achieve success and score goals. like a footballer by offering specific arguments that convince us to change our moral views in a particular corner of our lives.

The relation between Ethics and Applied Ethics:

Ethics and Applied Ethics are related with each other. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with questions about what is morally right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust. It is theory based but Applied Ethics deals with the practical problems which we are facing in this real world. It involves the examination of moral dilemmas and controversies in specific contexts such as business, medicine, technology, politics and the environment. Ethics is the broader philosophical study of moral principles which is written somewhere, on the other hand Applied ethics is a implementation or applicability of ethics in practical life. Keeping the moral theories in brain we have to make a decision by facing the real world issues. We can understand this with an example: An unemployed woman steals money from anyone's wallet so that she could buy medicine for her one year old baby as she can't afford it.

As per the ethical theory stealing is wrong, but if she doesn't steal the money, her baby might die. Though her act is morally wrong but we have to study her motive and principle before making an ethical decision.

Nature of applied Ethics:

Applied ethics, sometimes called 'Practical Ethics' and Moral Philosophy. It is a branch of philosophy that has developed out of the study of ethics and focus on aims to examine and define principles for moral behaviour and apply them to real world scenarios. Applied ethics is by its very nature, a multi-professional subject because it requires special understanding of a situation before making a decision of human behaviour as ethically right or wrong.

Whenever special understanding requires we can take help of Seven principles which involved in ethical decision making, those are -

1. Integrity
2. Respect
3. Responsibility
4. Fairness
5. Compassion
6. Courage
7. Wisdom

Integrity helps us to be honest in case of decision making process, respect involves honoring others rights, opinion and beliefs when it differs from our own, Responsibility means we should aware about the consequence of the decision and ready yourself of the decision and ready yourself to accept it be they positive or negative, Fairness involves making decision based on objective criteria and giving others equal opportunities; compassion indicates us to consider others feelings and not to harm anybody when taking decisions. Courage helps us to stand up for our beliefs, even when it's difficult or risky. Last principle wisdom is all about balancing head and heart, applying both rational thought and emotional intelligence in case of decision-making.

Method of Applied Ethics:

At first we have to study the specific situation and motive of persons who are involved in it then we have to find the real cause behind it before making any kind of ethical decision how people should act or not act.

Proponents of applied ethics want to teach us how we can apply moral knowledge and principles to real life situations and proceed to ethical solutions. In general, we find roughly three types of approaches in the practice of epistemology. A deductive method, an inductive method, and a combined deductive-inductive method, in other words also called a 'reflective equilibrium method'. The top-down approach follows a top down model. The method of applying accepted General moral principles to new particular situations in what we call deductive method. Ancient ethics rests on the belief that universally valid moral principles are possible and that our destiny try to apply those general principles are possible and that our destiny is try to apply those general principles regardless of place, time. this is how we proceed in general principles.

All actions, which have certain characteristics (M), are obligatory (P).
Actions (S) that is associated with certain type of properties (M).
Therefore, this act(S) is obligatory.

In modern terms, this approach is referred to as principlism. seems to be simple in its application. But here the question is whether any universal valid moral rule possible or not. Its very tough to ethologists to find any moral principles or standard that applies successfully to all situations. Real-life moral dilemmas are multidimensional, and they contain many elements that are entirely new. Again in many cases we are faced with conflicting ethical principles or ideals where the relevant of following one general principle the exact opposite result of applying another ethical principle.

The exact opposite method is the ascending method. In this approach the researcher places more emphasis on the actual situation follows a 'bottom-up' model approach.

The exact opposite method is the ascending method. In this approach the researcher places more emphasis on the actual situation and follows a bottom -up model approach. In contrast to principlism this ascending approach is called contextualism in today's terminology. Those who apply this method of ethical research observe the details of actual situations, compare the present situation with other situations or events, often refer to paradigmatic judgements and arrive at conclusion.

Because of the limitations of these two methods,contemporary ethics researchers have proposed some compromises,which may call the combined 'deductive-inductive method'.Following, John Rawl many call it reflective methodology.(In Bengali the balance of judgement method can be called).In this approach,ethical enquiry involves a balanced review of normative moral norms,theoretical projects,other relevant ethical knowledge,and actual situations,through which we arrive at a coherent position.

In conclusion we can say that Applied Ethics plays a very crucial role in real world problems that affect real people.It helps us identify a greater number of variables and arrive at more accurate conclusions about how to act in a given scenario.The importance and significance of applied ethics has increased in recent years across many academic disciplines.This is due to the fact that the ethical principles which are common place in society have evolved and become much more complex than they were in the past.As a result not only does Applied Ethics cover a wide area but its implication for each of these specific fields are both far reaching and multifaceted.Applied ethics can help improve the moral character of individuals and help build a society that's based on the values of mutual respect,equality and fairness for all people.

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