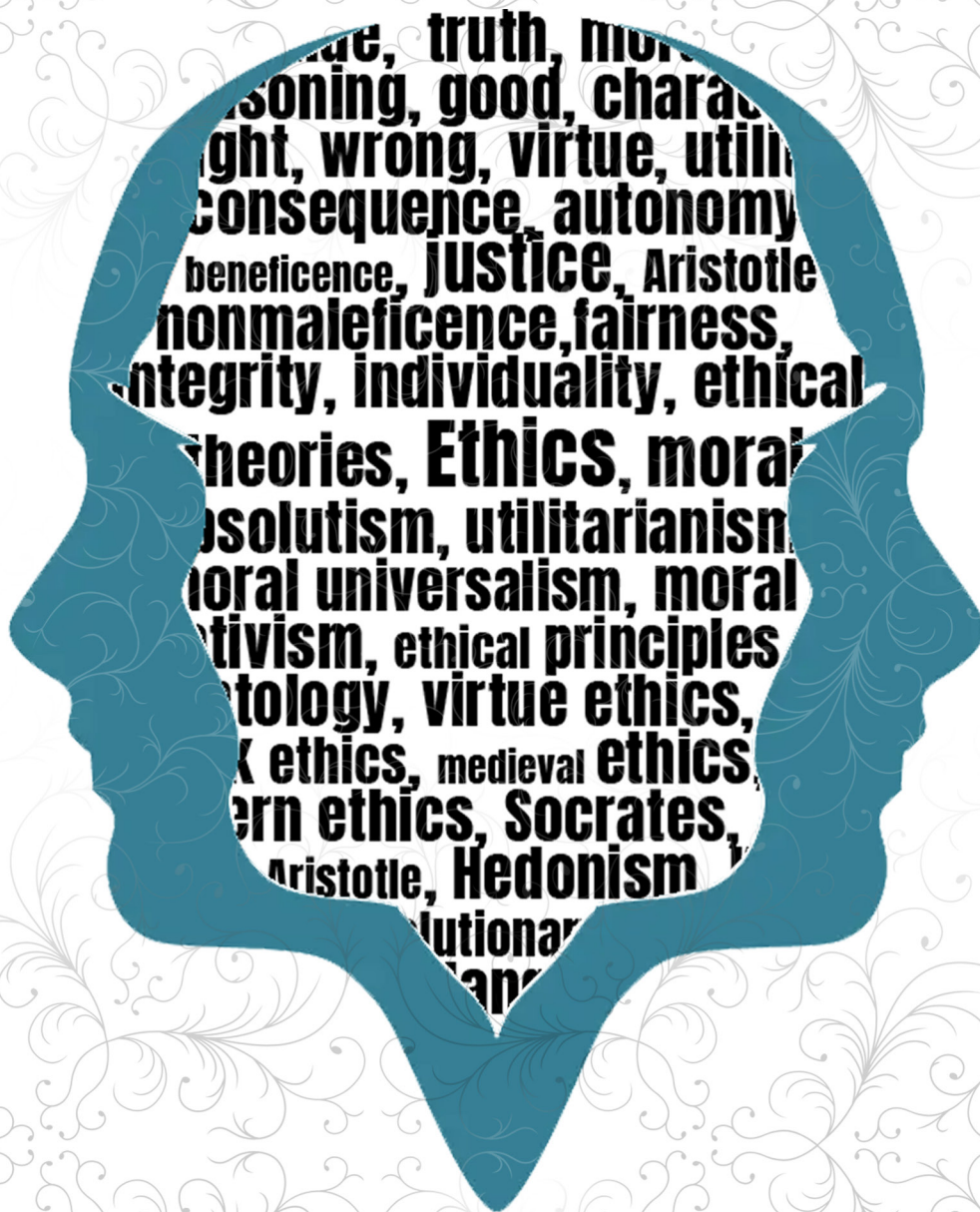


ETHICS

COURSE CODE: M23PH04DC

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN PHILOSOPHY

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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Mission

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Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Ethics

Course Code: M23PH04DC

Semester - I

Discipline Core Course
Postgraduate Programme in Philosophy
Self Learning Material
(With Model Question Paper Sets)



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Ethics
M23PH04DC
MA Philosophy
Semester - I



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Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavours.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities.

The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The PG programme in Philosophy is conceived to be a continuum of the UG programme in Philosophy as it has organic linkage with the content and the form of treatment. In fact is a progression of the finer aspects of theories and practices. Having realised the limitations of empirical methodology in exposing the concepts in Philosophy, the university has taken special care to follow illustrative methodology throughout the discussions. It is expected to a lesson the heaviness of the content. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that you feel relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,
Dr. P. M. Mubarak Pasha

01.02.2024

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A wooden frame with a dark brown center containing the text 'BLOCK 1' and 'Introduction to Ethics'. The frame is made of dark wood with visible grain and four corner joints secured with small metal pins. The center is a solid dark brown rectangle.

BLOCK 1

Introduction to Ethics

UNIT 1

Meaning, Definition and Scope of Ethics

Learning Outcomes

- After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:
- understand the meaning of morality and ethics
 - grasp the definition and scope of ethics
 - evaluate the different ethical theories and analyses of different moral spheres and their importance
 - improve creative thinking about human actions

Background

Before the emergence of moral values, the interaction between people within society was different from that of the times after its emergence. Morality is supposed to serve the interests of society as a whole. Every human has certain social obligations and moral codes to follow. Ethics is a manual of moral principles. Ethics plays a great role in judging human character and determining behaviour as good or bad. Ethics examines how humans interact within their social environment and judge right from wrong within it. Humans have followed some or other ethical systems since ancient times, but ethics have varied over time. Therefore, the definition and rules of ethics differ at each stage.

Keywords

Normative science, Positive science, Meta ethics, Applied ethics

Discussion

1.1.1 Definition and meaning of ethics

- Meaning of ethical terms 'good' and 'bad'

Is it right or wrong to harm someone in self-defence? Is it morally right to refuse helping an accident victim? In these situations, we follow certain unwritten social norms dictating proper behaviour – known as ethics. Ethics is the normative science of human behaviour in societies – judging such behaviour as morally right or wrong, good or bad. We often hear statements like: A physician is about to leave the hospital after his/her shift when an emergency patient arrives. But the physician ignores the patient, and as a result, the patient dies without care. In this case, we would say 'They shouldn't have done that.' We often say 'helping others is good' when someone feeds a hungry person. And when someone misbehaves, we say their character is bad. All these examples refer to morally relevant situations where in we apply ethical principles to assess the correctness or incorrectness of actions.

- Value is the quality of the object, that satisfy subject's desire

We describe many things as good or bad, not just human actions. We often talk about 'good wine' and 'misfortune.' Here, the words 'good' and 'misfortune' have ambiguous meanings. Therefore, we need a theory called axiology or value theory to distinguish the meanings and manage them. In axiological theory, value refers to an object's quality satisfying the subject's desire. An object does not have real value unless it gets recognition as valuable. When a student's character is described as good, it refers to their quality or worth.

- Science of human behaviour

The word 'ethics' comes from the Greek word 'ethos,' meaning customs, usages, or habits. Ethics is also called moral philosophy. The word "moral" derives from the Latin word '*mores*,' also meaning customs or habits. Ethics is literally the science of human behaviour. Ethics examines the habitual behaviours representing fixed dispositions of will or character. Character refers to inner dispositions of mind expressed through habitual behaviours externally. Therefore, ethics is the science of character and conduct, evaluating individuals' voluntary actions and habits as right or wrong while judging their character as virtuous or vicious.

Ethics is the science distinguishing right from wrong conduct as it examines human behaviour to determine what is right from wrong. Behaviour involves choice, will, and habit

- Ethics examines the highest moral good of human beings

expressing permanent nature of will. Therefore, ethics is the science of the highest good and human virtues. It evaluates behaviour concerning an ideal, trying to determine the highest ideals in human behaviour and how to judge such behaviour correctly. Hence, ethics is the science of ideals in human life and moral good.

- Ethics falls under normative science

Suppose we want to know what kinds of bacteria or vitamins are present in milk. We conduct research in a laboratory to understand its composition. With laboratory devices, we can easily detect bacteria and vitamins in milk through experimentation. Such a branch of science is called positive science, also known as natural science. On the other hand, ethics falls under normative science, representing systematic knowledge involving the systematic study of human behaviour, will, and motives. It provides guidance on what ought to be rather than simply describes what is.

- Normative science deals with norms and ideals

Positive science is natural science, while normative science is regulative science. Positive sciences emphasize on scientific experiments, but normative science explicates principles which govern human behaviour. Natural science analyses facts while normative science deals with values, trying to determine norms and ideals. There are three ideals in human life - truth, beauty, and goodness - the highest human values. Our conscious life connects with knowing, feeling, and willing. Logic deals with truth conditions; aesthetics handles beauty, creation and value; morality refers to right and wrong actions. Therefore, logic, aesthetics, and ethics are normative sciences.

1.1.2 Scope of Ethics

- Ethics focuses on principles and ideals

The scope of ethics is broad and still evolving as new moral dilemmas arise, and social values change. It helps to navigate complex ethical issues and make responsible choices by providing critical thinking and moral reasoning frameworks to aid individuals and societies. Ethics focuses on essential principles and ideals for moral society progress. It deals with moral issues in daily life and is a major field of study today since no human institution can progress without ethics. It studies ideals and values which are vital for growth, development, and progress.

The scope of ethics involves defining the moral ideal, without concerning the origin or development in human behaviour. It focuses on examining the standard that conduct or behaviour

- Ethics discusses Will

must conform to. But to inquire the ideal conduct, one must know nature of conduct. Behaviour means consistent actions causing consistent conduct - called character - the permanent habit of will.

- Moral life strongly links with physical life

Ethics's relation to biology: Human behaviour constitutes morality occurring in mental and physical life. Mind and body are inseparably related, so moral life strongly links with physical life, indirectly relating ethics and biology. According to Herbert Spencer, good/bad behaviour standards promote/hinder the development of life. Morality needs reference to a rationally willing being, while organic life development is subordinate to life's purpose. So, biology has no direct relation to ethics.

- The difference between how we should act and how we actually do

Ethics's relation to psychology: There are differences between psychology and ethics. Psychology is a positive science; ethics is normative. Ethics examines how we should act; psychology studies how we actually act. Psychology deals with actual volition processes in the mind, not inquiring into their rightness/wrongness or the highest good determining them. In short, psychology is factual; ethics examines ideals. As a positive science, psychology studies all mental processes theoretically. As a normative science, ethics explains moral facts through reference to ideals for how we ought to live. Moral facts are mental facts falling under psychology. But psychology studies them as phenomena without moral significance, while ethics is the science of *ought*.

- Sociology examines habits, behaviours and customs

Ethics's relation to sociology: Humans cannot live apart from society, owing much mental and moral equipment to it. Individuals derive ideas of right/wrong and good/evil from prevailing societal customs and behaviour and influence societal moral progress through moral visions. Thus, individuals and societies influence one another. Ethics is the science of individual morality; sociology examines the structure of human society, origin and development as part of groups' natural history. It studies custom/institution modifications causing origin, growth and development of group. Humans without society are impossible. Sociology examines society's habits, behaviours, customs and institutions at all development stages from savage to civilized, tracing social institutions' origin and development through various stages to their present state. But ethics seeks to determine individuals' highest good. Every individual is part of society, so personal good must align

with common societal good. Sociology relies on ethics for custom/behaviour moral evaluations.

- Ethical norms in political life

Ethics's relation to politics: Politics describes governmental structures and functions as a normative science, prescribing laws, organizing institutions, and regulating individual behaviors to achieve common good or utility. Politics for the common good closely relates to ethics determining individuals' highest good. Governments should enact laws and establish/maintain institutions as per ethical principles, ensuring moral considerations. A state's moral foundation is the general people's will, not arbitrary rule, with strength/security depending on it. Its covenant establishes an ideal welfare state, best promoting citizen self-development and moral perfection. Moral life is closely related to political life with moral behaviours/duties maintained by the state and virtues tying to the state.

- Judging human behaviour and conduct

Normative Ethics: This branch of ethics prescribes moral human behaviour in society, determining individual actions as right or wrong. It establishes governing principles, rules, and guidelines for individual conduct. Normative ethics provides principles of general conduct, sometimes loosely applied for theorizing and making moral judgments. Normative ethical theories examine right versus wrong, obligatory actions, claiming universal value acceptance and seeking rational justification as moral behaviour patterns. It establishes a moral framework, prescribing societal lifestyles. Its principles have been represented throughout history as the 'Golden Rule' of common sense. Normative ethics has four theories:

- Virtue means inner morality and Deontology is moral duty

Virtue ethics deals with individuals' moral standards and behaviour sources, not external conduct code obedience. Morality stems from inner nature, guiding decision-making. Therefore, actions matter more than justifying behaviours. **Deontological ethics** comes from the Greek word *deon* meaning duty. It determines morality by rule-following, so actions have inherent moral implications regardless of consequences, aligning with moral obligations.

Actions yielding the greatest good for most people provide rightness, as seen in utilitarianism, egoism, hedonism, intellectualism, welfarism, etc. Pragmatism suggests that constant evolution is morality's state, like scientific knowledge. By reflecting on rightness and understanding changes, new thinking ways emerge. We will revisit normative ethics later.

- Meta ethics is the epistemological meaning of words

Meta ethics examines words' epistemological meaning, defining conceptual questions, ethical statements' origins and limitations. Also called analytic ethics, it asks: What is the meaning of moral terms or judgments (semantics)? What is the nature of moral judgment (ontology)? Metaethical theory intersects with linguistic philosophy starting in the 20th century. We use moral terms like good/evil and right/wrong alongside behaviours, e.g., cheating is wrong, with 'wrong' meaning 'not right.' Therefore, metaethics attempts to define moral word meanings. It discusses human value sources and meanings - innate, preexisting values knowable as universal governance over human behaviours.

- Application of ethical norms in life

Applied ethics: Is abortion right or wrong? Is bluffing business partners ethical in negotiations? Is mercy killing ethical? Applied ethics examines application of ethical principles to real-life issues, also called practical ethics. Ethical application is more common than metaethics. Practical ethics explains appropriate actions for given situations, often assuming affirmative existential answers, addressing the moral permissibility of specific actions' and practices. It handles various ethical issues and social responsibilities in daily life, including situation-specific ethics. Though tracing back to ancient Greece, applied ethics has been a separate discipline only since the 1960s. It deals with healthcare ethical issues involving life, death, and human welfare. Applied ethics is the art/science of discussing/reflecting on contexts' moral/ethical issues like business, medicine, professions, and engineering. Developing since the 1970s, applied ethics has sub-disciplines like medical, animal, and environmental ethics. It differs from metaethics and normative ethics by addressing ethical issues, practices, and policies in professions, technology, government, etc. using philosophical methods. This broad usage focuses on problem-solving without committing to general theories/principles. It discusses moral and ethical issues in different areas of human practices.

Summarised Overview

In this unit, we have discussed the nature, meaning, and scope of ethics. The study of morality, good/bad, and right/wrong is called ethics - examining moral principles, goals, appropriate/inappropriate behaviours. Ethics is essential for human existence. Humans have practiced ethical theory since ancient Greek times, influenced by views on life and society, differing across Greek, medieval, and modern eras with evolving concepts and practices over time.

Self-Assessment

1. Discuss the nature and meaning of ethics.
2. Distinguish normative ethics from legal ethics and their professional importance.
3. Define the scope of ethics. Explain the different ethical domains.
4. What is axiology?

Assignments

1. What is business ethics? Elaborate it as a branch of applied ethics.
2. Explain how deontological ethics help us judge right actions.
3. Differentiate positive science and normative science.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



UNIT 2

Development of Ethical Theory

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the ancient origins of ethics
- judge the background of ethical systems across different periods
- evaluate the development of ethics from ancient Greek to the modern period

Background

Traditional Greek philosophy started with Thales of Miletus in the 6th century BC, lacking ethics as an area of study initially. Sophists - professional wisdom teachers - first introduced moral issues, flourishing in the 5th century BC. Spanning millennia and cultures, history of ethics is vast and complex, exploring ethical principles, theories and systems guiding human behavioural development. When one realizes their conscience convinces them an act is right despite others deeming it wrong, basic questions arise on right/wrong behaviour and the standards distinguishing good from bad conduct.

Keywords

Greek ethics, Virtue, Religious ethics, Modern ethics, Internal determination

Discussion

- The development of ethics

Studying the development of ethics provides historical knowledge on how theories and frameworks evolved over time. History shows past philosophers' ideas, debates and contributions, exposing us to diverse philosophical perspectives, encouraging critical thinking and inquiry. In short, it provides historical perspective, intellectual enrichment, conceptual clarity, theory evaluation ability, practical application, and moral awareness - equipping us with knowledge and skills to engage in moral discourse, make moral decisions and advance moral thinking.

- Different periods of ethics

Ethical thinking began in the fifth century BC in western philosophy. The fifth century saw Greek society rapidly transitioning from feudal monarchy to commercial/industrial democracy. European ethics is divided into different periods, each with distinct characteristics - Greek culture from ~500 BC to 500 AD, the medieval moral period from 500-1500 AD, and the modern period thereafter. Each period offered its own moral framework - Greek city-states viewed good citizenship as morally good; medieval religious morality valued holy living; modern ethics emphasizes individual freedom and duties.

1.2.1 Greek Ethics

- Greek ethics began in the 5th century BC

The history of ethics deals with the evolution of ethical ideas over time. Confucius, Heraclitus, and Pythagoras are some of the thinkers who have elaborated on the concept of entropy (558-479 BC). The history of ethics can be traced back from the 5th century BC onwards to the time of Socrates. His goal as a philosopher among the Greeks was to make his fellow beings aware of the importance of logically challenging their practices and beliefs. At that time, philosophers mainly started looking for justifications for accepted norms of behaviour. The more radical of them believed that all morality was a product of human convenience and that we only refer to things as good when they suit our convenience.

- "Man is the measure of all things"

Greek ethicists focused their thinking and research on the topic of "man" and everything related to his origin and existence as a living entity in time. According to a philosophically important phrase, "Man is the measure of all things," which means man himself decides what is right and wrong, of what is and what is not. This is interpreted to suggest that each man is the ultimate arbiter of truth and that when men disagree, there is no absolute

reality that determines who is right and who is wrong. It can have many interpretations.

- “Virtue is Knowledge”

Socrates believed that the goal of philosophy was to improve people. As a result of appealing to happiness as the indisputable end goal of every decision we make, the Socratic theory amounts to an ethical theory known as eudaimonia. Socrates raised the issue of identifying the logical relationship between values and facts, and moral philosophy was established by requiring intellectual justifications for moral decisions. The phrase “virtue is knowledge” summarizes his view. Socrates may not have been aware that to secure the practical goodness of life, most men need knowledge of the nature of good and good will. Or, maybe, Socrates was aware of this, and his saying was his attempt to emphasize the importance of knowledge that most people would consider irrelevant. Although it is unknown whether Socrates ever explicitly stated that morality is a matter of nature rather than custom, it was likely his view. Knowing one’s own nature is crucial to leading a dignified life, or goodness is natural in that it is inherent in human nature, something he acknowledged when he referred admiringly to the proverb “Know thyself.”

- Plato’s ethics deals with ideas about an ideal world

In the history of ethics there were various proposals of principles related to moral order. Plato and Aristotle, two main followers of Socrates, systematically explored the ethical knowledge that Socrates believed was essential for virtue. Plato’s theory of forms was the first defence of moral realism and provided a neutral foundation for moral truths. Through his dialogues and essays after *The Republic*, Plato developed an understanding of nature, God and humanity to derive moral ideals. His fundamental goal in moral philosophy was to pave the way for a vision of good. In particular, Plato understood the real world to be a world of “ideas” - equivalent to imperfect things existing in the perceived world. For Plato, this was metaphysical knowledge. The most fundamental of these ideas was ‘goodness’, implying it was natural as the most fundamental fact.

- For Aristotle, ethics relates to the theory of happiness

Aristotelean ethics was based on the notion of eudaimonia, meaning happiness. *Eudaimon* refers to living in a way that pleases a god. Eudaimonia was the greatest goal, with other goals like health and wealth pursued to promote well-being. No one tries to live well just to achieve another goal. However, recognizing happiness as the highest goal provides little help until we identify the good constituting it. Aristotle argued that ethics



was not a conceptual field - we ask what is good for humans not just out of curiosity, but because understanding human flourishing allows us to better grasp our case.

- Differences between Greek thinkers

Later ethical schools count Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as founders, perhaps reflecting their wisdom. They taught about understanding goodness and that it was part of the nature of things, though not stating so explicitly. To understand good requires knowing the whole universe's nature, especially human nature. The major division between Plato's and Aristotle's systems may have already emerged in their contemporary groups. The Cyrenaics believed a good deed was a pleasurable one - known as hedonism. Cynics alternatively believed leading a noble life meant freedom from human impulses and gratification, dissociating pleasure and goodness. Epicureans followed the Cyrenaics in later Greek thought with a more developed theory that pleasure was the only thing that good men should pursue. Stoics followed the Cynics by finding that a good life meant avoiding passions and consciously pursuing duty.

- Good things satisfy human impulses

In the historical perspective, we have two views of moral life: Epicurean and Stoic. A basic tenet of moralists known in modern times as utilitarians is that good things satisfy human impulses, especially for pleasure. This was the philosophy of Epicureans. In modern times, Kant and other moralists believed with Stoics a good action was consistent with an intelligible principle, as principles of morality were intelligible, perfectly rational laws of nature. Specifically, the Stoics stated that virtue was natural. Aristotle differed from Plato in his technique of inquiry and ideas on the place of moral principles in human affairs, creating naturalistic traditions while Plato founded religious, idealistic ethics.

1.2.2 Medieval Ethics

- Transition to the Middle Ages

Middle Ages' refers to the roughly 1,200-year interval between the Roman Empire's end and Protestantism's rise, meaning "in between". There are two categories - early and late Middle Ages. Earlier times mainly focused on bringing Greek philosophy and Christian theology together. The 11th century saw the end of the union between Christian theology and Greek philosophy ends. Morality influenced scholasticism and colleges. Its great result was also the Renaissance. 17th century Humanists viewed the fall of ancient Rome and Greece as a catastrophe, calling these early Middle Age centuries the "Dark

Ages”, loving the pagan Greco-Roman aesthetic. Throughout the later period, morality remained linked to scholasticism of universities and the dominant philosophy, influencing Renaissance humanism’s 16th century development

- Christianity and ethics

Two major Christian thinkers/theologians, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, dominated medieval philosophy. Christianity proved a powerful cultural, moral force then. Although having some reservations about prevailing religious doctrines, both Plato and Aristotle were religious. Christianity focused on selflessness, especially Jesus Christ’s selfless death, inconsistent with Aristotle emphasising individual satisfaction as the highest good. This unit covers medieval moral issues:

- Existence of God
- Human nature
- Freedom of will
- Relationship of faith and reason
- Relationship of civil and church authorities
- Nature of just war

- Ethics related to the church or Christianity

In the middle ages, philosophy and religion are practically indistinguishable. With Christian philosophy’s advent, a new moral history period emerged. As Christianity spread across Europe, a new emphasis on individuals emerged, changing Greek thinking linking ethics to politics and the good citizen to the good man, meaning more consideration of inner morality. Although all virtuous people desire heaven, their spiritual status defines inner impulses. However, the Middle Ages generally did not support moral speculation and subsequent ethical theory growth. Doubting or questioning was dangerous violation with the church having increasing power to punish.

- Beginning of casuistry

Standards of Right and wrong was finally given beyond dispute as the church understood it – The revelation of God’s law in the Bible. Casuistry or applied ethics began playing an important role as the Bible and Church could only infer principles and examples’ specific applicability to unique events. Casuistry’s corruption, giving the term its contemporary evil meaning, dates slightly later. The early Middle Ages’ most famous thinker, St Augustine, reframed morality as a combination of material wellbeing and the soul’s preparation for eternal salvation. The next major medieval philosopher was Thomas Aquinas, achieving a true synthesis between Augustinian theology and

Aristotelian science/philosophy. Aquinas successfully demonstrated that Aristotelian materialism and Christian doctrine could coexist while developing comprehensive knowledge of nature, people and God.

1.2.3 Modern Ethics

- Transition from Greek to Medieval period

In the 15th and 16th centuries, after nearly 1,000 years the Church lost supremacy over most of Europe. One reason for this was the Greek learning's revival, with examples of human achievement apart from Christian revelation, significantly contributing to the explosion of individualism emphasising freedom and achievement. Another was the Church's own divided, weakened authority. In any case, individuals were unwilling to accept priests' judgments as the moral final word - the statement suggested is simplified. Many in religious communities sought moral authority previously vested in clergy/church located in the Bible itself with considerable personal interpretive freedom serving as the ultimate Protestant moral standard. However, more thoughtful people were forced to search for an understandable, reasonable standard of right and wrong.

- Ethics is internal determination

Some philosophers believe that the distinction between good and bad depends only on the moral determination maker's perspective - a man usually sees what he likes as good and dislikes as bad. Some thinkers believed knowing the difference between right and wrong could only be very intuitively or through direct insight, while more fundamentalists believed that was all that could be said.

- A modern perspective

Two moral philosophers, Butler and Mill, are pioneers of modern ethics. Butler's ethics states a man's unknown conscience may lead him to take mysterious actions. There are different views on the essence of law claimed by some thinkers to underlie the good/bad distinction. The greatest medieval Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas agreed with Greek Stoics that moral rule was a law of nature and reason, as did Adam Smith and David Hume. All tried psychologically investigating conscience or the moral sense to find morality's basis.

- Theory of happiness

Hume's 'passion' implies pursuing anything amounts to passion for it. His criticism of the "is" to "ought" transition is very important. Some philosophers believe that the distinction between right and wrong depends on the results of our actions, especially their ability to satisfy desires and give us and others

pleasure - continued in contemporary times by famous English utilitarian school members like John Stuart Mill and Sidgwick, seen in Greek Cyrenaics and Epicureans schools.

- Developments in ethics

In the 18th century, English philosophers developed the influential psychological theory of associationism, which inspired moral thinkers like Butler, Hume, and Smith to explore ethics by analyzing the components of conscience. In the 19th century, evolutionary biology began to influence moral philosophy. While some philosophers, such as Hegel in Germany and T.H. Green in England, integrated evolutionary ideas into their ethical theories, Herbert Spencer and others proposed that pleasure served as a foundational moral principle. Additionally, Westermarck utilized insights from evolutionary psychology to develop modern theories of moral relativism, which argue that moral norms are influenced by human preferences and cultural contexts rather than absolute standards.

- Deontology and the utilitarian theory of ethics

Kantian ethics is deontological, implying one must uphold duties and obligations to arrive at one's guiding moral principle. Another concept is the categorical imperative stating "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law". Utilitarianism defines pleasure as most predatory, with Bentham measuring the duration/intensity of pleasure and pain. He asserts evaluating the right action is possible using a hedonistic calculus establishing actions' exact utility - best to take the course producing the most pleasant results.

Summarised Overview

The ethics as a philosophical discipline unfolds across the Greek, Medieval, and Modern periods. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid foundational theories. Socrates emphasised the pursuit of knowledge and virtue, linking happiness to ethical living, while Plato explored moral realism through his theory of forms. Aristotle, on the other hand, focused on eudaimonia, or human flourishing, as the ultimate goal of ethics. Later ethical schools, including the Cyrenaics, Cynics, Epicureans, and Stoics, diverged on concepts such as pleasure, virtue, and duty. The Epicureans prioritised pleasure, while the Stoics emphasised rational principles and duty. These differing perspectives on morality continue to shape ethical discourse, with echoes of their ideas present in contemporary utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. In the Medieval era, Christianity became a central and integrating moral doctrine with philosophy through thinkers like Augustine and Aquinas, while casuistry and individual moral reflection emerged amidst Church authority. In Modern times, secular thought challenged traditional authority, with thinkers like Kant and utilitarians like Bentham and Mill proposing diverse ethical frameworks, from duty-based ethics to the pursuit of pleasure. Throughout history, ethical inquiry reflects a complex interplay of philosophical, religious, and cultural influences, shaping our understanding of morality.

Self-Assessment

1. Discuss the differences in the perspectives of Greek and medieval ethics.
2. Identify the ethical aspects of modern moral thinkers.
3. What changes happened during the transition in ethical theory from medieval to modern period?
4. Explain the ethical developments in modern philosophy.

Assignments

1. Describe the contribution of Thomas Aquinas in the development of ethical theory in the medieval period.
2. Critically evaluate Hume's criticism of the transition from 'is' to 'ought' and its relevance in ethical theory.
3. Enumerate the different shades of Utilitarianism.

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UNIT 3

Ethical Perspectives

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- get a glimpse of different ethical perspectives and their relevance
- understand various ways in which human actions are judged as right and wrong
- recognise the focus of different ethical perspectives
- understand moral absolutism and moral relativism in depth
- appreciate the diverse ethical perspectives and moral view points

Background

The frameworks or lenses that people use to analyse and assess human actions are referred to as ethical perspectives or ethical positions. These frameworks influence humans' conception of what is right and wrong and direct their moral judgments of actions. Philosophical, theological, cultural, or personal aspects can give rise to ethical perspectives and take certain moral stand points. When ethical problems are considered from a variety of different aspects, we have ethical perspectives like moral absolutism, moral relativism, ethical cognitivism and ethical non-cognitivism, moral realism and moral anti-realism, moral intuitionism, emotivism, prescriptivism, virtue theory, deontology, utilitarianism, etc.

Keywords

Absolute standard, Relative standard, Intuition, Rational deliberation, Naturalism



Discussion

- Moral absolutism and its function on universal moral maxims

1.3.1 General Introduction

Different ethical perspectives exist based on their focus of enquiry. The ethical perspective which affirms that there exist certain universal, absolute moral standards, criteria and laws and it is only upon which we can judge any action as right or wrong is called moral absolutism. Moral absolutism functions upon the moral maxims/laws established in universal sense.

Kantian ethics or the deontological ethical theory produced by Immanuel Kant is a common example of moral absolutism. Kant introduces categorical imperative in three fundamental maxims or axioms which are statements expressing a general truth or role of conduct applicable universally for all human kind. These are the principle derived through rational reflection rather than empirical observation or intuition. Kant's moral philosophy is grounded in the notion of apriori moral principles that are knowable through reason alone and, according to him, morality is considered universally and independent of human experience in specific situations.

- Maxims of universalizability, human dignity and human autonomy

The three maxims which Kant emphasises are: 1) maxim of universalizability; act in any situation on that maxim which you can will to become a universal law applicable to all in every situation, 2) maxim of human dignity; act on that maxim that you treat yourself and others, as human beings, always as an end, and never as a means, 3) maxim of human autonomy; act only as a member of a kingdom of ends. In contrast to the moral absolutism, moral relativism denies the existence of any such absolute moral standards or maxims or code of conducts. While the former affirms that there exist universal, objective standards with which only we can judge human actions as right or wrong, the latter denies that and states that all standards are relative and subjective differing from person to person and from situation to situation.

Kant's ethical theory is called deontological ethics as the duties and rules are conceived as central in guiding human actions. Deontologists assert that certain actions are inherently right or wrong, regardless of their consequences, and that individuals have a moral obligation to adhere to the duties or principles. An action is judged as right or wrong by looking if the action has been done in accordance with the duties or principles

- Duty for duty's sake
- Act in accordance with universally prescribed moral maxims

universally fixed and in adherence to them. In other words, in deontological ethics, an action is considered morally good because of some certain characteristics of the action itself, not because the product or result or consequence of the action is good as it is the case in utilitarian ethics. Deontological ethics holds that at least some acts are morally obligatory regardless of their consequences for human welfare. "Duty for duty's sake" is descriptive of the Kantian deontological ethics. Deontological theories have been termed formalistic, because their central principle lies in the conformity of the action to certain rules or laws and they place such formal structure (rules and laws) as central in judging human actions as right or wrong.

- Morality and immorality are decided upon the consequences of action

Utilitarianism decides actions as right or wrong by focusing on the consequences of actions in sheer contrast to Kantian deontological ethics. It strongly opposes the existence of any pre-established moral standard or code and judgment of actions as moral or immoral by testing if they adhere to such moral standards or codes. Utilitarianism is called teleological ethics (also called consequentialist ethics or consequentialism) as it holds that the basic standard of morality is precisely the value of what an action brings into being. Any action should be judged as right or wrong based on the consequence or utility of that action. Utilitarianism upholds the dictum "maximum happiness for maximum numbers". According to this, for example, bringing a developmental project like dam or railway line by government is morally right if the project gives utility, benefit and happiness for a maximum number of people. Upon this condition, Utilitarianism disregards the forced evictions of huge population for the same project. It stresses on the maximum utility of the actions.

- Moral proposition 'stealing is wrong' is same as a natural proposition 'earth is flat'
- Debate on whether moral proposition can be said true or false like other propositions

Ethical cognitivism and non-cognitivism are metaethical perspectives based on the truth value of moral statements. Moral judgements, according to the former, express a belief of those who make such judgements and the beliefs have a truth value; they are capable of being true or false. For example, a moral judgement like 'stealing is wrong' is considered as a proposition where the subject term denotes an act known as 'stealing' and the predicate term refers to a property called 'wrongness'. This moral proposition can be said true or false like any other proposition such as 'earth is flat,' according to ethical cognitivism. Ethical non-cognitivism, in contrast to that, would affirm that ethical judgements express only emotions or desires which do not have any truth value. Emotivism and prescriptivism are

metaethical theories which come under ethical non-cognitivism which reject the idea that moral judgements describe facts assert the point that they only express emotions, feelings and disagreements in human attitudes and moral tastes.

- Difference on the existence of objective moral facts
- Difference on whether moral entities are reducible to natural entities or not

Moral realism and moral anti-realism, two opposing metaethical perspectives, put their emphasis on the question of the existence of mind-independent moral facts. Both accept the cognitivist view that moral judgements are truth-bearing statements but differ on the question of the existence of mind-independent moral facts. While moral realism affirms the existence of objective moral facts corresponding to 'rightness' and 'wrongness', existing independent of the minds, like the scientific facts, moral anti-realism denies it. Moral naturalists (a moral realist stream) and non-naturalists (a moral anti-realist stream) differ on the point if the moral properties are themselves natural entities or reducible to other natural entities. While the former affirms that they are reducible, the latter denies the same.

- We have an innate capacity to know what is right and wrong

The metaethical perspective called moral intuitionism keeps its thrust on how do we know that something is morally right or wrong or on what is the source of knowledge about moral rightness and wrongness of an action. The theory maintains that basic moral propositions are self-evident in and of themselves and they do not need any other means. According to the moral intuitionism, we can apprehend certain actions as right or wrong as we apprehend the self-evident truths by intuition, without making use of any reasoning. In essence, moral intuitionists believe that individuals possess an innate capacity to recognise right and wrong based on intuitive moral perceptions. These intuitions are often considered foundational and serve as the basis for moral judgments.

- Moral intuitionism and its opposition to ethical rationalism and utilitarianism

Moral intuitionism stands in opposition to various ethical theories such as ethical rationalism that emphasises rational deliberation and the application of moral principles or rules and argues that moral knowledge is acquired through the exercise of reason, logical analysis, and critical reflection on ethical principles. It also stands in opposition to utilitarianism that prioritises consequentialist considerations of human actions.

1.3.2 Moral Absolutism

Moral absolutism affirms that there are certain universally accepted moral laws or absolute moral standards based

- Single moral standard applicable to all rational beings

on which we can judge the rightness and wrongness of human actions. Absolutism is fundamentally based on a presupposition that there exists a set of universally applicable norms which are equally applicable and valid in all places and times. Moral absolutism is about a single moral standard for all human beings.

- Absolute foundation for ethics

Kant is a main proponent of moral absolutism. He attempts to build ethics upon absolute rational and moral foundations. W.T Stace says that the absolutist “often maintains, not merely that the moral law is the same for all the men on this planet which is, after all, a tiny speck in space but that in some way or in some sense it has application everywhere in the universe. He may express himself by saying that it applies to all ‘rational beings’ which would apparently include angels and the men on Mars (if they are rational). He is apt to think that the moral law is a part of the fundamental structure of the universe.” Absolutism is a deontological approach which regards duty as the central concept in ethics.

- Moral absolutism and Christian theological orientation

The real routes of moral absolutism lie in the Christian theological dispensation. Morality in Christianity has been conceived as issuing from the will of God. God was firmly believed as the single source and author of morality. The philosophical questions about foundations of morality and source of moral obligation were treated as a part of religious skepticism. Thus, such questions never appeared. For a true believer, what pleases God or what God commands is the right and what displeases him or what he forbids is the wrong. However, with the advent of modernity, the God was replaced with rational self-consistent human being. The rational human being, the modern God, does not act upon the whims and emotions and thus his/her will, orientation and commands will be the same everywhere.

1.3.3 Moral Relativism

- There is no single and objective standard
- Relativist standards

Moral relativism denies the existence of any objectively true moral standards. There is no single universal, absolute, objective standard. Nor are there a variety of local objective standards. All standards or tests by which we discriminate good and bad actions are subjective. W.T Stace says: “People’s subjective feelings about morality are the only standards which exist.”

Moral Relativism in general means that our judgment about certain actions to be right or wrong is relative to or depend-



- Moral judgments vary from culture to culture and individual to individual

ent upon various factors such as context, culture, society and person. Cultural relativism affirms that moral judgments are relative to cultural contexts and they can vary from culture to culture. And, individual relativism claims that moral judgments are relative to an individual's perspectives or perceptions and can vary from individual to individual. When we say that moral judgments are relative to individuals or cultures, it means that people judge certain actions to be right and wrong based on their cultural beliefs or norms. It means that there is no universal, absolute, rational standard or criterion with which we can judge people's actions to be right or wrong. Rather, there are only external factors based on which the moral judgments are made.

- No criterion of virtue or justice as such
- Roots of moral relativism in Sophists' relativism

In his *A Short History of Ethics*, Alasdair Macintyre says that moral relativism is a "presupposition of this teaching that there is no criterion of virtue as such, apart from success, and no criterion of justice as such, apart from the dominant practice of each particular city." While discussing moral relativism, Macintyre brings Plato's dialogues in the *Theatetus* and links moral relativism with the general relativist theory of knowledge especially with the famous dictum attributed to the sophist Protagoras "Man is the measure of all things; of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not." Plato discusses this while refuting the sophist view that sense perception is the sole source of knowledge. This dictum in general means that there is no objective perception or knowledge applicable to everyone. Rather, whatever things seem to be true for an individual is true for him/her. In this sense, moral relativism and moral absolutism are related to epistemological subjectivism and objectivism.

- Morality is a matter of human convenience

William Lillie also finds the routes of moral relativism in the sophist's relativism. The sophists, according to William Lillie, saw all morality as a matter of human convenience – we judge certain things to good/right because they suit ourselves or the majority of the mankind. The dictum mentioned above meant for him that human being decides for him/herself what is right and what is wrong, and there is no other standard. Anthropologists have substantiated the claim that morality is a matter of human convenience or taste by providing us countless examples of extravagant, weird, and fanciful 'moral' customs. This confirms that there is nothing or near to nothing which has been regarded always and everywhere as morally good/right by all humans.

- General evolutionary tendency of modern times

W.T Stace finds the revolt of moral relativists against absolutism as a general revolutionary tendency of modern times. According to him, moral relativism is a result of the decay of faith in the dogmas of orthodox religions. Moral absolutism was supported and strengthened by belief in the dogmas of orthodox religion especially that of Christianity. However, in modern times of widespread criticism and skepticism against religions, the Christian support to it tends to collapse. Like any revolutionary movement which is primarily negative, the relativism is also negative and intends to destroy the foundations of ethical absolutism. “It is simply a denial of ethical absolutism. That is why the best way of explaining it is to begin by explaining ethical absolutism. If we understand that what the latter (ethical absolutism) asserts the former (ethical relativism) denies, then we understand ethical relativity.”

- Moral relativism and its opposition to the moral progress through history

Moral absolutism can serve as an index to assess the moral progress of individuals and societies. It provides a basis for evaluating and critiquing moral practices and encouraging moral growth and progress with certain actions to be right or wrong inherently. In other words, we not only judge actions by our own moral code or standard, but also, we judge that specific moral code is better than another. This can only be done with a presupposition of absolute standards in morals. If there is no moral superiority of one code over another, there can be no such thing as moral progress or moral decline. Without any absolute standard or criteria in morals, we have no right to make such moral judgements as there is nothing in respect of which we can compare the two codes. Moral relativism implies that different times have different standards and variable moral customs and thus the moral effort is meaningless.

Summarised Overview

Ethical perspectives are the frameworks through which human actions are analysed and evaluated as good or bad and right or wrong. Ethical perspectives differ based on their focus of enquiry with regards to philosophical and moral investigations. There lies a perennial conflict between moral absolutism and moral relativism and they have been considered as foundational ethical perspectives in moral discourse. Central to the debate between them are contrasting views on the existence of absolute universal moral standards. While moral absolutism posits the existence of universal moral standards, relativism challenges this notion, suggesting that moral judgments are contingent upon

cultural or individual perspectives. Deontological ethics, a significant ethical stream under moral absolutism, and the consequentialist ethics put forth differing views on what is to be considered in evaluating an action as right or wrong. In deciding the criteria of what makes an action right or wrong, the former considers whether the action is done in accordance with universally accepted moral maxims, while the latter considers whether the action will bring in the consequences of happiness or harm to the people. In a different word, while utilitarianism's focus is on maximising utility as a basis for ethical judgment, the deontological approach emphasises adherence to moral rules or duties.

There are also metaethical debates concerning the truth value of moral statements, with cognitivist perspectives asserting the objective truth of moral judgments and non-cognitivist views contending that moral statements/judgements merely express subjective emotions or desires without objective truth. A philosophical exploration of moral realism and anti-realism, two metaethical theories, deal with the metaphysical substrata of moral facts and their purported independence from human cognition. This discourse traverses the terrain of moral naturalism versus non-naturalism, probing the ontological status of moral properties and their reducibility to natural entities. Also, moral intuitionism offers us a distinct epistemic lens, positing that moral truths are self-evident and accessible via intuition, thereby evading the need for rational justification as it is established in the case of ethical rationalism. The ethical perspectives provide us a gateway to the diverse and contradictory frameworks that underpin moral reasoning and evaluations elucidating the complex interplay between philosophical, theological, cultural, and individual determinants of ethical judgments.

Self-Assessment

1. Enumerate four ethical perspectives and elaborate on them.
2. Explain the maxims of universalisability, human dignity and human autonomy in Kantian ethics. What does Kant aim with them?
3. Differentiate between moral absolutism and moral relativism
4. How moral relativism is related to epistemological relativism?

Assignments

1. How does moral relativism dismiss the moral progress? Elaborate.
2. Moral relativism is the result of a general evolutionary tendency of modern times. Elaborate.
3. Debate on how Kantian deontological ethics stands in opposition to the consequentialist ethics.

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BLOCK 2

Greek Ethics



UNIT 1

Sophist and Socrates

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand key principles of Sophists and Socratic philosophy
- understand the central concepts of Sophist and Socratic ethics, including their views on virtue and morality
- compare and contrast the ethical viewpoints of Sophists and Socrates, identifying similarities and differences

Background

Ethical traditions provide guiding principles for individuals and societies across diverse cultures. These traditions, deeply rooted in the histories and philosophies of civilisations, offer insights into the nature of morality, human conduct, and virtuous life. They address fundamental questions about the purpose of human existence, the nature of good and evil, and the path to a morally upright life. From the ancient wisdom of Confucianism in China to the ethical teachings of Buddhism, the monotheistic ethical frameworks of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the philosophical musings of ancient Greeks, ethical traditions have shaped the moral landscape of humanity. These ethical traditions provide a framework for understanding morality, guiding behaviour, and fostering the development of virtuous individuals and communities. The richness and diversity of these traditions reflect the multifaceted nature of human ethical inquiry, offering valuable insights that continue to shape ethical discourse in the contemporary world. In ancient Greek philosophy, scholars like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid the groundwork for virtue ethics, emphasising the cultivation of moral character, wisdom, and living in accordance with reason. In the following discussion, we will focus on the ethical philosophy of Sophists and Socrates, reflecting their distinct ethical perspectives.

Keywords

Virtue, Knowledge, Happiness, Universal morality, Relativism

Discussion

- Ancient Greek philosophers laid foundation for Western ethical tradition

Tradition of Western ethical philosophy, considered as the rational exploration of the principles governing human conduct, traces its roots back to the ancient Greeks. Although Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes did not concentrate on ethics in the same way as some of their successors, their philosophical theories and investigations into the nature of reality can help us gain a better understanding of the intellectual and cultural environment in which moral thought subsequently emerged in ancient Greece. In addition to these foundational philosophers, there were those directly engaged in ethical philosophy. Frank Thilly notes that Pythagorean philosophy, for example, uniquely integrates ethics by drawing upon a foundation rooted in number mysticism. The Pythagoreans extended their mathematical insights to non-corporeal concepts, proposing an interpretation that aligns with their understanding of corporeal entities. According to this perspective, abstract notions such as love, friendship, justice, virtue, and health are fundamentally connected to numerical principles. At the same time, the Sophists, another influential group of thinkers, adopted a different approach. Unlike adherents to a unified system of ethical beliefs, the Sophists were recognised for their pragmatic and relativistic stance toward morality. These varied approaches, ranging from number mysticism to relativistic pragmatism, collectively laid the groundwork for subsequent ethical inquiries by philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

2.1.1. Sophists and Socratic Philosophy

- Sophists embraced individualism and critiqued philosophical inconsistencies

In philosophy, the Sophists emerged as a distinct group of educators and thinkers in response to the divergent conclusions drawn by their predecessors. Observing the lack of consensus among Greek philosophers regarding the fundamental principles governing reality, the Sophists critically examined these philosophical inconsistencies. Their conclusion centred on the limitations of human thought as the primary cause for the



contradictory outcomes. The defining characteristic of Sophist philosophy is the emphasis on freedom and individualism, marking a period where individuals distanced themselves from authority, prioritising the improvement of their personal lives. Apart from this, the Sophists showed an intense zeal for investigation, engaging in various realms, including political, epistemological, metaphysical, moral, religious, economic, and scientific domains.

- Differences of opinion regarding the contribution of Sophists to philosophy

The term ‘sophist’ originally denoted wise men and, historically, referred to scholars who were philosophers, teachers, and orators. However, Plato’s influence later narrowed its meaning to relativism and rhetoric, dismissing the broader range of subjects covered by Sophists. Recent scholars challenge Plato’s reductionist perspective, asserting that Sophists contributed to various fields such as ethics, political theory, literature, mathematics, oratory, mnemonics, law, and astronomy. Despite their extensive contributions, Sophists received relatively limited recognition in the history of thought, primarily attributed to the lack of direct evidence supporting their philosophy. Plato, the critical observer, diminished their contributions, accusing them of prioritising appearance over reality and persuasion over truth. However, it is essential to approach Plato’s criticisms cautiously, recognising the temporal distance between him and the Sophists. Modern scholars like George Grote have reconsidered Sophist philosophy, acknowledging its value.

- Emphasis on practical education

Unlike other Greek philosophical schools, the Sophists did not form an organised school of thought but shared a focus on practical ends. In response to the growing influence of democracy in Athens and Sicily, the Sophists played a crucial role in educating individuals on rhetoric, oratory, grammar, and dialectics. Their teachings aimed at achieving precision in word meanings beyond conventional interpretations. A common argument taught by the Sophists was ‘eikos,’ signifying reasonable expectations or probabilities. Widely used in deliberative speeches and forensics, this method allowed for making reasonable predictions when direct testimony or evidence fell short. Many sophists have left their mark on intellectual history, but a few stand out for their significant contributions. Protagoras was known for his success as a teacher, while Gorgias gained fame as a highly-skilled orator. Prodicus specialised in defining words, showcasing a unique focus within sophistry. Hippias, another sophist, excelled in science, particularly astronomy. Beyond these, other sophists like Alcibi-

amas, Evenus, Antiphon, Lycophron, Critias, Thrasymachus, and Euthydemus also made valuable contributions to various subjects, adding diversity to sophist teachings.

- Socrates always prioritised morality

Socrates, a man of uniqueness with his character and philosophy, was born in Athens. His philosophy was established through conversations with people from all walks of life in public spaces like streets and marketplaces. These dialogues covered various topics, including poetry, religion, love, friendship, politics, trade, and science. Socrates displayed a comprehensive understanding of these subjects, showcasing a broad range of knowledge. His notable skill lay in argumentation, allowing him to bring clarity, especially in matters related to morality. This pragmatic aspect made Socrates a thinker who prioritised morality. His moral convictions formed the basis for his decisions, reflecting a fearless attitude towards life. Even in the face of false charges that led to his condemnation and death by the state, Socrates remained steadfast in his commitment to what he thought right.

- Socrates challenged sophists, emphasised universal truth

The significant issue that Socrates identified in the political and moral realm was the misconception of the meaning of truth. He confronted this issue raised primarily by sophists, emphasising the importance of human reason. Socrates criticised the sophists' approach, highlighting the dangers of trusting every opinion without a strong foundation for knowledge. Sophists argued that truth is subjective, varying from person to person, making universal truth unattainable. He saw this as a mistake and proposed a method known as the midwifery method to reach universal definitions. According to him, while individuals may have unique opinions, we must dig beneath the surface to find common ground, fostering fundamental agreements that transcend individual perspectives.

2.1.2 Sophists Ethics

The Sophists provided a unique ethical perspective in ancient Greek philosophy, characterised by relativism and subjectivism. Central to Sophist ethics was the concept of relativism, which questioned the existence of absolute, universal moral principles. The Sophists argued that moral beliefs and facts depended on human perceptions, societal norms and cultural conventions rather than being objective or fixed. This view rejects the idea of universal moral truths that apply universally to all people, places, and times. Instead, it contends



- Sophists rejected universal morals and emphasised subjectivism and relativism

that moral judgments are contingent upon the circumstances in which they arise. In other words, what may be considered morally right or wrong could vary from person to person or from one community to another. The Sophists also emphasised subjectivism in their ethical philosophy. They argued that individual subjectivity played a crucial role in shaping moral judgments. People's beliefs, emotions, and experiences influenced their understanding of what was morally acceptable or unacceptable. According to Sophistic thought, this subjective aspect of morality further contributed to the context-dependent nature of ethical considerations in today's life.

- Sophists extended scepticism to ethics

The ethical arguments presented by the Sophists echo their earlier discussions on knowledge. Just as they questioned the possibility of achieving definite knowledge due to the conflicting ideas in cosmology, the Sophists extended their scepticism to ethics. In epistemology, the nature philosophers' speculative inquiries into the fundamental nature of reality yielded conflicting and inconclusive results. This lack of consensus led the Sophists to challenge the possibility of achieving stable and universally applicable theoretical knowledge. Similarly, in the ethical domain, the Sophists turned their attention to the diverse array of customs, moral codes, and traditions prevalent in different societies. The multitude of perspectives on what constituted ethical behaviour and social norms across various cultures prompted the Sophists to question the existence of absolute and universally valid standards for conduct.

- Man is the measure of all things

The scepticism inherent in the Sophists' ethical arguments arises from their observation that different nations and cultures held divergent views on morality. This diversity suggested that ethical norms were contingent on cultural, historical, and societal contexts, making it challenging to establish fixed and objective standards applicable across the world. Influenced by this realisation, the Sophists raised fundamental questions about the possibility of asserting absolute truths in the ethical domain. A renowned Sophist, Protagoras, expressed his relativist philosophy with the famous statement, 'Man is the measure of all things.' According to him, what appears true or ethically right can vary from person to person. Individuals have the autonomy to form their own beliefs about reality and morality, and they bear sole responsibility for their actions.

Protagoras argued that morality is subjective and arbitrary, shaped by personal opinions and cultural contexts. Subjective

- Cultural diversity questions universal standards

experiences and beliefs play an important role in shaping individuals' worldviews and notions of right and wrong. Protagoras emphasised that each person judges what is sweet, bitter, hot, and cold, as well as good and bad. What is considered ethically right for one person or society may not hold the same moral weight for another. This relativistic perspective challenges the notion of objective moral truths, asserting that moral judgments are contingent on individual experiences. However, he also acknowledged the role of the community or state in determining what is just and unjust. For those seeking to live in a society, Protagoras argued that personal good aligns with social justice. Adapting to societal norms becomes crucial for maintaining harmony and preventing societal conflicts.

- Pragmatic aspect of Sophists' ethics

The interconnectedness between personal good and social justice highlights the pragmatic aspect of Protagoras' philosophy, acknowledging the necessity of societal unity for those choosing to live within it. He asserted that all existing institutions, including laws and morality, were conventional products of human agreement rather than inherent truths. However, Protagoras acknowledged the vital role of these conventions, recognising their necessity for maintaining social and moral order. In simpler terms, he emphasised that certain rules, both legal and moral, must be followed to ensure the existence of any semblance of social and moral harmony. Conversely, for individuals uninterested in societal norms, the alignment between personal good and social justice may diverge.

- Other sophists' views on morality

Much like Protagoras, Gorgias held a conservative outlook on moral and ethical issues. Despite some of their peers taking a more critical stance, labelling morality as a result of power dynamics. The radical thinkers such as Polus, Thrasymachus, Callicles, and Euthydemus - individuals prominently featured in Plato's dialogues - did not completely discard the idea of morality. Instead, they viewed morality as a collection of conventions moulded by those in positions of authority, underscoring how power structures impact the formation of ethical principles.

2.1.3 Socratic Ethics

Socrates had a very different approach to ethics, with a deep commitment to the search for moral goodness and truth. He saw himself as a man on a mission. According to Aristotle, Socrates was primarily occupied with ethical matters, demon-



- Socrates aims at deriving universal ethical definitions

strating interest in the virtues of character. Aristotle notes that Socrates was the first to introduce the problem of universal definitions concerning ethical excellence. This assertion is supported by the portrayal of Socrates provided by Xenophon. In Plato's *'Apology,'* Socrates, during his trial, professes his mission, emphasising that he sought to do the greatest good for everyone. His mission was to persuade each person to prioritise virtue and wisdom over personal interests and to consider the welfare of the State before their individual concerns. By cultivating wisdom and virtue, he inspired individuals to care for their most valuable possessions - their souls.

- The ultimate aim of human life is the attainment of true happiness

Eudaimonia is a central concept in Socratic ethics, reflecting the idea of human flourishing or the highest good. The term has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy and is composed of two words: 'eu,' meaning good or well, and 'daimon,' which can be translated as divine beings or forces. While eudaimonia is commonly translated as 'happiness' or 'well-being,' within the realm of Socratic ethics, it transcends mere pleasure, encompassing a deeper sense of fulfilment and excellence. Socrates believed that the ultimate aim of human life is to achieve eudaimonia by cultivating moral virtues and developing one's intellectual capacities. For Socrates, living a virtuous life and constantly seeking wisdom were the keys to attaining true happiness and realising one's full potential.

- The interconnection between wisdom and virtue

Socrates' ethical philosophy is rooted in the belief that knowledge and virtue are inherently connected. According to him, a wise person, one who possesses knowledge of what is right, will invariably act in accordance with that knowledge by doing what is right. This connection between knowledge and virtuous action forms the core of Socrates' ethical framework. Socrates contends that individuals do not commit wrongdoing knowingly and with deliberate intent. In other words, he argues that no one consciously chooses to do evil for its own sake. In his view, genuine wisdom seamlessly translates into virtuous behaviour, creating an inseparable connection between understanding what is right and acting accordingly. Socrates goes beyond the theoretical realm, emphasising the practical manifestation of wisdom in ethical choices. According to him, the harmony between knowledge and virtue implies an ethical consistency, suggesting that those truly knowledgeable about ethical principles will consistently exhibit virtuous conduct across various situations. Socrates uses his philosophy as a means of ethical education, aiming to enlighten individu-

als about the interconnectedness of knowledge and virtue. His vision reflects an ethical idealism, promoting holistic ethical development and encouraging individuals to apply their understanding of moral principles in their conduct actively.

- The unity of virtue

Following the connection between wisdom and virtue, Socrates posited the unity of virtue. In his ethical philosophy, only one virtue exists - an understanding of what genuinely benefits humanity, fostering the health and harmony of the soul. His ethical inquiries aimed at uncovering this universal and consistent moral norm. It is essential to note that for Socrates, teaching was not merely providing theoretical instruction; it involved guiding individuals toward real insight. However, this perspective sheds light on the teachability of virtue in Socrates' philosophy. It also reveals the intellectual emphasis in his ethical framework. Socrates insisted that, like a doctor who learns medicine, a just person learns what is just.

- Knowing what is right indeed leads to doing what is virtuous

As stated above, Socrates strongly believed in ethical intellectualism, which states that knowing what is right inevitably leads to doing what is virtuous. However, this idea clashes with our real-life experiences. Have not we all, at times, knowingly done something wrong? When we hold someone responsible for a nasty action, it is typically because we assume they knew it was wrong. However, what about those moments when we, or others, act against what we know is right? Let us understand it with a simple illustration: Imagine you are on a diet, fully aware that eating that tempting slice of cake is not the right choice. Nevertheless, there are instances when you indulge, knowingly going against what you understand to be the right decision. Based on this point, Aristotle criticised Socrates for overlooking an essential aspect - our tendency to act against our better judgment due to moral weakness. It acknowledges that even though we know what is right, our irrational side can lead us to make morally questionable choices.

- True happiness lies in moral integrity and not in material wealth

In response to this criticism, the scholars place the pragmatic character that Socrates attributed to ethics. He believed true advantage lies in being self-controlled rather than lacking self-control, being just rather than unjust, and embracing courage over cowardice. He also claimed that authentic pleasure and lasting happiness are found in a life of moral integrity rather than immorality. Contrary to the notion that abundant external possessions lead to happiness, Socrates argued that true happiness is not derived from gathering material wealth but is



linked to virtuous living. When Socrates connected virtue to knowledge or wisdom, it is suggested that he meant a personal conviction, not just knowledge. This implies that he considered knowledge as something deeply felt and understood, a genuine conviction guiding a person's actions.

Summarised Overview

The Sophists' approach to ethics was often characterised by relativism and scepticism, asserting that moral values were subjective and varied from person to person or society to society. Sophists were known for their rhetorical skills and argued that virtue could be taught as a set of practical skills, rather than as an absolute and universal truth. Their focus on effective persuasion and pragmatic success led to criticism from philosophers like Socrates. Socrates, in contrast, challenged the Sophists by asserting that there is a unity of virtue. He contended that there is only one virtue – an insight into what is genuinely good for individuals, promoting the well-being and harmony of the soul. Socratic ethics is rooted in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, with the belief that virtue is not just a set of skills but a deep understanding of timeless moral principles. Socrates emphasised the teachability of virtue through dialectic inquiry, aiming for a genuine, transformative insight into ethical norms.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the central tenet of Sophists' approach to morality?
2. Explain the pragmatic and relativistic approach of Sophists to morality.
3. How did Socrates link knowledge and virtue in his ethical philosophy?
4. According to Socrates, can a person knowingly choose to do evil? Explain.

Assignments

1. Explore the Sophists' relativistic stance on ethics. How they challenged absolute, objective standards of conduct.
2. Explore Socrates' theory on the relationship between knowledge and virtue. How

does Socrates argue that a truly wise person will always act virtuously?

3. Examine the significance of eudaimonia in Socratic ethics. How does Socrates define and prioritise true happiness, and what role does virtue play in achieving eudaimonia?

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UNIT 2

Plato and Aristotle

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- get an awareness of Plato and Aristotle's ethics, especially their definitions of virtue and excellence
- examine the distinction between Aristotle's intellectual and moral virtues and the concept of 'golden mean' in ethical behaviour
- evaluate Plato's four cardinal virtues - wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice- and their significance in individual and societal life
- know Aristotle's notion of 'eudaimonia' as the highest human good
- analyse Plato's ideal state, recognising the roles assigned to different classes based on their psychological nature and the pursuit of virtues

Background

Plato and Aristotle were two great philosophers from ancient Greece. While they share some common ground in their moral thinking, they differ in their metaphysical assumptions and approaches to ethical inquiry. Plato followed his teacher, Socrates, who used the midwifery method to find out truths about morality. He admired Socrates and wrote many dialogues where Socrates was a prominent character. After the death of Socrates, Plato started a school called the Academy where people could learn philosophy. Aristotle was one of Plato's greatest disciples at the Academy for more than 20 years. He developed philosophy by critically approaching his master's thought. While Plato focused on transcendental realm of forms, Aristotle focused on studying empirical and scientific facts and observed nature. In ancient Greece, both Plato and Aristotle were really important in shaping how people thought about morals and society. They wrote about justice, living a good life, and the ideal society.

Keywords

Cardinal virtues, Wisdom, Courage, Temperance, Justice, Nicomachean Ethics, Eudaimonia

Discussion

2.2.1 Plato's Cardinal Virtues

- Moral truth exists in the transcendental realm and can be apprehended through reason

Plato embraced many of the ideas of his teacher Socrates, particularly emphasising the notion that knowledge is crucial for virtue and that justice is essential for human well-being. As an idealist, Plato believed that knowledge transcended the sensory world, which represents the true understanding of the transcendental world of ideas. He posited that moral truths exist in this transcendental realm and can be apprehended through reason. Plato discussed his concept of 'virtue' in two significant works: 'Protagoras' and 'Republic'. In 'Protagoras', he gives an allegory where the character Protagoras correlates virtue with various parts of the human face, suggesting that individuals may possess some virtues while lacking others. Conversely, 'Republic' explores the composition of the human soul, which Plato divides into three parts: appetite, spirit, and reason.

- Three distinct parts of the psyche: the rational emotional and the appetitive part

Plato's understanding of human nature encompasses the three distinct parts of the psyche. The rational part seeks what is beneficial and good, the emotional or spirited part desires honour and prestige, and the appetitive part craves physical pleasures. These desires may conflict, leading to inner struggles, with individuals prioritising them differently based on their nature. Plato introduced an ideal state in the Republic, where individuals are assigned different roles according to the nature of their human psyche. Philosopher-kings, belonging to the rational part of the psyche, are considered the ruling class, emphasising the pursuit of what is beneficial and good over wealth and status. Lower classes of artisans and warriors are tasked with concerns regarding wealth and status, while philosopher-rulers view political power as a duty to prioritise the welfare of the state.

- Temperance for artisans, courage for warriors, wisdom for rulers, and justice is the guiding principle

Artisans, driven by appetitive desires, require temperance to control impulses. Plato advocates for economic regulation to prevent excessive wealth accumulation, ensuring the pursuit of genuine good. The warrior class, focused on honour and prestige, defends the state and earns glory. Those who prioritise community benefit, embody virtues such as courage, wisdom, and justice, ensure the well-being of all. Each class embodies virtues relevant to its role: temperance for artisans, courage for warriors, wisdom for rulers wherein justice is the guiding principle. The four important virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, which Plato introduced in the ideal state, are called cardinal virtues because they are the core principles that other virtues are built upon.

a. Wisdom

- Wisdom is the virtue of the rational part

Wisdom is the first and most important virtue that belongs to the ruling class, the leaders of society, the philosopher kings. This virtue is essential for wise governance because it helps the rulers make thoughtful and effective decisions. The virtue of wisdom comes from the rational part of the soul and involves understanding of our moral duties in different situations and acting on them. Wisdom, here, means practical wisdom or prudence that helps to figure out the right thing to do at the right time. It means using your knowledge and judgment wisely to make good choices, especially when faced with challenges or tough decisions. A wise person is like a guide, leading society in the right direction for the benefit of everyone.

- Wisdom includes qualities like care, foresight, prudence and ability to make decisive choices

Wisdom helps the rulers to guide the state through both theoretical and practical challenges. It is about being able to act wisely, especially in times of crisis, to protect and safeguard the well-being of the state. The state of a country reflects the wisdom of its leaders, and wise decisions benefit not only the leaders but also the citizens of the state. When the city as a whole is happy and thriving, it means that individuals within the community are also content. Wisdom includes qualities like care, foresight, prudence, and the ability to make decisive choices. It is about thinking ahead and considering the consequences of actions, ensuring that decisions are made for the greater good of society.

b. Courage

- Courage is rooted in the emotional part of the soul

Courage, also known as fortitude, is the virtue of being brave in the quest for justice. It encompasses the ability to overcome the fear of pain or the temptation of pleasure. Fear is a natural response to threats, but courage allows individuals to act despite their fears. It is particularly important for those who are in the fighting class, such as warriors, as it helps them to tackle obstacles that hinder justice. Courage involves a readiness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others and enables individuals to confront challenges that stand on the way of justice. Courage is rooted in the emotional part of the soul, focusing on inner strength and determination. It involves facing difficulties with persistence, even in the face of opposition, whether from external sources or internal sources.

- Courage encompasses both valour and fortitude

Courage encompasses both valour and fortitude. Valour is the active aspect of courage, involving pushing forward and confronting danger and pain head-on. On the other hand, fortitude is passive courage, involving enduring suffering without losing determination. In addition to valour and fortitude, courage also involves perseverance, the ability to keep going even in the face of adversity. Faith and hope play crucial roles in courage, providing the strength and optimism needed to face challenges with bravery and willpower.

c. Temperance

- Temperance means self-regulation, control, and harmony among conflicting situations

Temperance means the strength that safeguards against going to extremes. It suggests self-regulation, control, moderation, and harmony among the conflicting situations. Temperance is all about finding balance, especially for traders who need moderation in their actions. It helps them avoid impulsive decisions driven by extreme emotions such as greed or fear. Temperance emphasises the harmony between conflicting desires and rational thinking. It involves aligning one's desires with rational judgment and resisting short-term gratification in favour of long-term well-being.

- Temperance helps to choose higher values over fleeting pleasures

Temperance involves discipline to choose the higher values over the fleeting pleasures. It is steadfastness that helps one to resist the lower physical values that could distract one from choosing higher values. However, temperance does not mean denying the reasonable pleasures that align with our values. When we lack temperance, it becomes more challenging to ex-

ercise prudence, which involves making wise decisions, avoiding unnecessary risks, and refraining from actions we might regret later on.

d. Justice

Justice is the flawless order where everyone does his/her duties properly, like the right person in the right job, corresponding to the different classes and roles within society. It occurs when leaders govern wisely, soldiers fight bravely, and workers engage in their tasks with diligence and thriftiness. Justice encompasses all virtues like wisdom, courage, and temperance. It is the harmonious operation of the intellect, emotions, and desires, all guided by reason. Justice has an abstract nature in Plato's philosophy compared to other virtues.

- Do what is ought to do

- Justice is the flawless order where everyone does the duties properly

- Justice brings order and balance to the inner selves

Plato's idea of social justice mirrors his concept of individual justice. Just as individual justice balances the conflicting interests within the soul, social justice balances the conflicting interests within the state. It means being fair to everyone, regardless of personal biases, preferences, or self-interests. Justice covers all the virtues we practice in society, including honesty, loyalty, kindness, love, politeness, and happiness.

According to Plato, justice is what brings order and balance to our inner selves, ensuring that all our desires are pursued in the right way and none dominates over the others. In a just person, the rational part of the soul guides decision-making, prioritising what is beneficial while still acknowledging other desires. However, Plato recognised that moral weakness could occur when the lower parts of the soul overpower reason, leading to actions against one's better judgment.

- The ultimate aim of moral conduct is 'eudaimonia'

Plato believed that the ultimate aim of moral conduct was to achieve happiness, which he called 'eudaimonia'. He introduced cardinal virtues such as wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice, which help individuals to attain this happiness. Comparing Plato's views with those of his teacher, Socrates, reveals the nuanced differences. While Socrates emphasises rationality and knowledge in ethical decisions, Plato, along with rationality acknowledges the existence of non-rational desires. According to Socrates, wrongdoing stems solely from ignorance, while Plato suggests that it can also arise from non-rational desires. Plato's exploration of virtue underscores the complexity of ethical decision-making, incorporating both



reason and the particular human desires and motivations. Plato argues that the virtuous will always be happy, emphasising the importance of the soul over bodily concerns. According to Plato, life in accordance with justice ensures a good and fulfilling life, regardless of external challenges.

2.2.2 Aristotelian Ethics

Aristotle, an important figure in ancient Greek philosophy, left an ineradicable mark on ethical inquiry through his seminal work, the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle is widely recognised for consolidating virtue ethics into a distinct philosophical discipline, even though he is not the originator of virtue ethics. Aristotle believed that, like any science, ethics should identify its domain and establish ‘first principles’ to explain fundamental aspects. He posited the highest human good as its foundational principle. He contended that understanding these supreme good enables individuals, including politicians aspiring to improve society, to pursue lives of excellence and contribute to the well-being of others. Aristotle’s ethical framework continues to shape discussions on how to live virtuously and foster flourishing communities.

- Aristotle’s seminal work on ethics is *Nicomachean Ethics*

For Aristotle, the ultimate aim of all human endeavours is happiness, which he describes as the continuous contemplation of eternal and universal truths. Aristotle believed that the highest good, called *eudaimonia* or happiness, is something we aim to achieve because it is valuable in itself. He thought that everything else we desire is chosen for the sake of happiness. We choose one thing for the sake of another until we reach the highest good, which is happiness. For Aristotle, happiness includes things like honour, pleasure, reason, and virtue, and it is something we pursue not just for ourselves but also for others. Aristotle also believed that happiness is something achievable by everyone, not just a select few. It is a unique human quality which involves activity, not just feeling good. According to Aristotle, happiness is self-sufficient, meaning it lacks nothing good for a person.

- The ultimate aim of all human endeavours is happiness

Like Socrates and Plato, Aristotle views justice as a virtue crucial for achieving the human good. However, apart from Plato, he disagrees that justice alone guarantees a happy life. Aristotle challenges Socrates’ and Plato’s notion that virtues stem from a single source or principle. Unlike them, Aristotle identifies many virtues, not just a few, each with its character-

- Aristotle identifies numerous virtues with its characteristics

istics and suitability for different types of people. He believes that men and women may have different virtues, which goes against Socrates' and Plato's view of unified virtues for all. Unlike Socrates, who equated virtue with knowledge, or Plato, who prioritised wisdom, Aristotle sees virtue as a combination of knowledge and habit. Virtues, he argues, are developed through the control of emotions and desires by reason, leading to practical insight and moral excellence. For Aristotle, virtue is a habit that can be achieved through practice. By virtue, Aristotle does not mean bodily excellence, but it is related to the excellence of the soul.

- Intellectual virtue and moral virtue

Aristotle's ethical philosophy, as presented in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is divided into two main categories: intellectual virtue and moral virtue. Intellectual virtue pertains to the rational part of the soul and encompasses theoretical and practical knowledge. It enables us to think rationally. On the other hand, moral virtue resides in the conscious but irrational part of the soul and involves aligning emotions and desires with reason. Moral virtue helps us to handle our desires and emotions. Temperance and courage are examples of moral virtues involving the regulation of pleasure-seeking desires and the control of fear through reason. According to Aristotle, moral virtues are habitual patterns of deliberate choices aimed at achieving the good. They represent a balance, or mean, between two extremes.

- Aristotle's ethics is based on the 'golden mean.'

Aristotle's ethics is well expressed in the concept of the 'golden mean' where virtues lie between two extremes of deficiency and excess. The idea of the golden mean reminds us to avoid extremes and aim for moderation in our actions and attitudes. The virtues lie in finding balance or harmony and avoiding the risks associated with excessive or deficient behaviour. He believes that striking the mean is the mark of virtue because it represents success and praise. However, the mean is relative to each person's circumstances and context. Living a moral life involves practising moderation in all aspects. No human appetite or desire is inherently bad when guided by reason and moral principles. Moral virtue is attained through a blend of knowledge, habitual practice, and self-control. For Aristotle, temperance denotes striking a balance or moderation in bodily pleasures. For every virtue, like courage or generosity, there is a balance point between too much and too little. For instance, being overly reckless is excessive courage, while being too fearful is deficient courage or cowardice, where reason controls fear. The golden mean is where you find the right amount of courage, not too much or too little.

- Distributive and corrective justice

Aristotle's concept of justice is limited to matters of personal property and is divided into distributive and corrective justice. Corrective justice is about the relationship between the person causing harm and the person suffering harm. If someone hurts another person through actions, he/she is responsible for the harm caused. Legal scholars are interested in corrective justice, which deals with civil wrongs and compensation for harm. They see the idea of corrective justice as essential for understanding the relationship between someone who causes harm and the person harmed. By focusing on this relationship, we can understand better why someone should be held accountable for his/her actions and compensate those people whom he/she harm. Corrective justice deals with rectifying violations of the law, with penalties proportionate to the offence. It deals with the rectification of an injustice inflicted by one person on another. While distributive justice concerns the fair allocation of benefits and burdens based on contribution and wealth. It is based on the idea of comparing people and giving more to those who deserve more.

- Eudaimonia is achieved through the perfect activity of reason

Aristotle dismisses wealth and pleasure as the ultimate good, as they are not final or distinctively human. Instead, he sees the highest human good as an activity aligned with rational principles involving virtues like wisdom. Aristotle believes the most complete human good can only be achieved by living virtuously and engaging in intellectual pursuits, such as theoretical activity and the pursuit of wisdom. Ultimately, Aristotle posits that the highest good, or 'eudaimonia' (happiness), is achieved through the perfect activity of reason, wherein virtue guides human conduct towards flourishing and happiness. Aristotle also emphasises the importance of friendship, distinguishing between three types: utility, pleasure, and goodness of character. He views friendship as essential to human well-being, with genuine self-love intertwined with rational love for others.

Summarised Overview

The renowned ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle shared the belief that justice is fundamental for human well-being, but their views on the nature of virtues and their role in a happy life differed significantly. Plato, deeply exploring virtue in works like 'Protagoras' and 'Republic', conceptualised virtue as intertwined with the human soul, which he divided into reason, spirit, and appetite. He envisioned an ideal society where individuals fulfil distinct roles based on their nature, with philosopher-kings prioritising wisdom, warriors upholding courage, and artisans seeking temperance and justice. Plato introduced four cardinal virtues – wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice – as guiding principles for individual and societal harmony. Plato's ethical philosophy has left a profound mark on Western thought. His exploration of the ideal state laid the groundwork for subsequent ethical theories.

In contrast, Aristotle, while acknowledging the importance of virtues like wisdom and justice, emphasised the practical insight and balance required for virtuous living. Aristotle categorised virtues into intellectual and moral virtues, highlighting the importance of finding the mean between two extremes. He rejected the pursuit of wealth or pleasure as the ultimate human good, advocating instead for a life of virtuous conduct and intellectual engagement guided by reason to achieve 'eudaimonia', or happiness. His emphasis on virtues as a means to attain eudaimonia laid the foundation for virtue ethics. Aristotle's emphasis on practical wisdom and the search of intellectual excellence distinguishes his ethical philosophy from Plato's idealistic vision, underscoring the diverse perspectives within ancient Greek philosophy.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain Plato's conception of the human soul and its connection to the four cardinal virtues within the context of his ideal state.
2. Discuss the significance of the four cardinal virtues according to Plato.
3. Explain Aristotle's concept of the golden mean and its relevance to the development of moral virtues. Provide examples of virtues that exemplify the golden mean.
4. How does Aristotle differentiate between intellectual virtues and moral virtues? Discuss the role of each category in achieving eudaimonia.
5. Contrast Plato's idealistic approach to ethics with Aristotle's practical ethics, focusing on their views regarding virtue, happiness, and the human good.

Assignments

1. Analyse Plato's concept of justice as portrayed in his work 'Republic' and Aristotle's understanding of justice in his 'Nicomachean Ethics'. How do their views on justice differ, and what implications do these differences have for their overall ethical theories?
2. Evaluate the significance of the cardinal virtues introduced by Plato in his ideal state and Aristotle's emphasis on the golden mean in his ethical philosophy. How do these concepts contribute to the cultivation of moral excellence in individuals and societies?
3. Discuss the role of reason in both Plato's and Aristotle's ethical theories. How do they view the relationship between reason and virtue, and how does reason contribute to the attainment of the highest human good in their respective philosophies?

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UNIT 3

Greek Hedonism

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- get a general introduction to the hedonist philosophy centred on pleasure principle
- know the difference in the philosophical approaches to hedonism in Cyrenaic, Epicurean, and Stoic ethics
- appreciate different takes on different forms of pleasure such as sensory pleasure, intellectual pleasure and inner tranquillity and peace of mind

Background

The philosophical landscape of ancient Greece laid groundwork for diverse ethical perspectives, each offering unique insights into the pursuit of a good/happy life. Epicureans, guided by the teachings of Epicurus, emphasised the pursuit of ethical ideals attainable through clear reasoning. Alongside them, the Megarians, followers of Euclid, placed significant importance on ethical considerations within the Socratic tradition. Plato, influenced deeply by Socrates, dedicated his early works to exploring ethical virtues and the concept of the greatest good, while Aristotle, in his pursuit of theoretical and philosophical knowledge, gave significant importance to the ethical self-realisation. Despite the foundational contributions of these philosophers, the schools that emerged in their wake often remained rooted in their founders' principles, with little progression in thought. The Cyrenaics upheld hedonism, advocating for the pursuit of momentary pleasures, while the Cynics preached asceticism, emphasising the rejection of worldly desires. Meanwhile, epicureans and stoics upheld differing views on happiness and good life.

Keywords

Pleasure, Cyrenaic, Epicureanism, Stoics, Hedonism

Discussion

- Actions are good if they result in pleasure

Two distinct philosophical groups such as Cyrenaicism and Cynicism emerged, contemporary to Plato and Aristotle, each laying the groundwork for contrasting ethical perspectives that shaped later schools of thought. The Cyrenaics championed hedonism, asserting that actions are deemed good if they result in pleasure, a view that has persisted throughout history as one of the prominent ethical theories. On the contrary, the Cynics despised worldly goods and advocated for a life free from dependence on worldly desires and their fulfilment. Epicureans followed the footsteps of Cyrenaics and refined the concept of pleasure as the ultimate good to be pursued. Conversely, the Stoics, successors to the Cynic tradition, believed that the good life entailed the suppression of emotions and the rational pursuit of duty. The Stoics posited that morality is inherently natural, governed by rational laws comprehensible to human reason. Thus, they warned against the pursuit of pleasure, as it often led individuals astray from rational living. In their obsession with and commitment to rationality, the Stoics echoed the teachings of Socrates, emphasising the importance of rational knowledge in ethical conduct.

2.3.1 Introduction to Greek Hedonism

- Life's goal is pleasure and seeking pleasure is a human tendency

Greek hedonism is a school of thought that originated in ancient Greek which upheld that pursuit of pleasure is the ultimate good and purpose of life. Hedonism is derived from the Greek word 'hedone' which means pleasure. It underlines the point that the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of suffering serve as the major motivation for human action and decision-making. In other words, hedonism viewed the pursuit of pleasure as the highest kind of happiness and fulfilment in the life.

Eudaimonia, commonly translated as 'happiness' or 'flourishing' is a Greek concept from which Greek hedonism draws some sort of inspiration. In his theory of self-realisation, Aristotle uses 'eudaimonia' to denote the moral end. The term 'eu-



- Difference between Eudaimonism and hedonism with regards to happiness and pleasure

daimonism' is used to describe a group of moral theories that associate the state of happiness with the process of self-realisation. Eudaimonism can be viewed as an ethical theory that considers the moral end as the realisation of one's full potential, leading to the utmost happiness. Eudaimonia cannot be identified with hedonism as the former is concerned with 'happiness' while the latter is concerned with 'pleasure.' And, according to this theory, happiness differs from mere pleasure in several ways: (a) happiness arises from the harmonious cooperation of all of a person's activities rather than just one particular sensual activity, (b) happiness is a more enduring and less transient state of mind, when compared with pleasure and (c) happiness is intimately connected with the activities it accompanies, suggesting that these activities contribute to one's happiness in a significant manner. In this sense, Greek hedonism was challenged by great philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle who viewed that a life solely dedicated to pleasure-seeking could end up in a shallow and unfulfilling existence.

- Different hedonistic schools and their approaches to the idea of pleasure

While Greek hedonism, also known as ancient hedonism, emphasises pleasure, it is important to underscore that different hedonistic schools have different approaches to the idea. The schools affirmed that pursuit of pleasure can encompass various kinds of satisfaction including that of intellectual, emotional, and artistic pleasures and not just immediate sensual gratification. The Cyrenaic School promoted a way of living focussed on the present moments and stressed the immediate sensory pleasures. In contrast to that, Epicurus founded the Epicurean School emphasising intellectual pleasures while rejecting excessive cravings.

2.3.2 Cyrenaic Hedonism: Immediate Sensory Pleasures

- Immediate sensory pleasure is the purpose of human life.

Cyrenaicism, founded by Aristippus of Cyrene, is a hedonistic philosophical school which straightly promotes the maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of pain in the present moment. According to this school, a good action is one which gives pleasure and, pleasure is the ultimate good while sorrow is the ultimate bad. Cyrenaicism puts the quest for immediate sensory pleasure at the forefront of human life and stresses the importance of living in the present and indulgence in sensory pleasures to attain a fulfilling existence. This hedonist school not only says that the pursuit of immediate sensory pleasure is the ultimate goal of human life, but also it gives

higher value to the pleasure of this moment without having any long-term considerations.

- Pleasure is intrinsically good and valuable
- Focus on the pleasure in the present moment

Having a happy and contented life, according to Cyrenaic hedonism, is by maximising our experiences of satisfaction or enjoyment. An individual who is sensually happy by having good food, listening to music and having good possessions is experiencing sensual pleasure. In this view, pleasure is seen as having intrinsic value, and humans ought to make efforts to achieve pleasant sensations and feelings. Compared to other philosophical theories emphasising long-term objectives or intellectual/spiritual pleasures, Cyrenaicism emphasises living in the present and seizing chances for pleasure. It prompts us to indulge in the present moment and enjoy the life as it comes rather than worrying excessively about the past or future.

- Immediate sensual gratification of Cyrenaicism
- Calculated weighing of pleasures in utilitarianism

While Cyrenaic hedonism does indeed consider pleasure as a central concept, it becomes distinct from the modern utilitarianism as the former does not use a hedonistic calculus in the same way that utilitarianism does. Cyrenaic's focus is more on immediate sensual gratification rather than a calculated weighing of pleasures based on intensity, duration, and future consequences. Also, while individual preferences certainly play a role in determining what brings pleasure to a person, Cyrenaic hedonism also emphasised certain universal pleasures, such as bodily sensations, as sources of pleasure for all individuals.

2.3.3 Epicureanism: Pursuit of Intellectual Pleasure

- Happiness is pleasure

Hellenistic period witnessed emergence of two great schools, Epicureans and Stoics, both of which could be considered as hedonistic philosophical schools as they emphasised on pleasure principle. Epicurus, the famous Greek philosopher who lived 341-270 BCE, developed Epicurean ethics as a philosophical system with pursuit of pleasure as a key component. While Epicurus emphasised the pursuit of pleasure, the concept of pleasure in Epicureanism was distinct from other hedonistic schools. Epicureanism upheld the view that happiness is pleasure.

Epicurus distinguished between necessary and unnecessary desires. The desire to be free from bodily pain and external disturbances, having a calm existence, and helping in producing happiness are necessary desires. At the same time, unnecessary desires are those like desiring good food and drinks, sex, luxu-

- Epicureans advocated for the pursuit of long-term and sustainable pleasures

- Not the positive pursuit of pleasure but the absence of pain

- Pursuit of tranquility and inner peace by turning away from the external

rious vehicles or assets which typically produce unhappiness. In short, Epicurus distinguished between different types of pleasures, advocating for the pursuit of long-term, sustainable pleasures over short-term gratification. He aimed for ataraxia, which is often translated as 'inner serenity' or 'peace of mind.'

The most pleasant or happy life is one where we abstain from unnecessary desires and achieve a state of inner tranquillity (ataraxia) by being content with simple things, by being free from unnecessary desires and fears, and by choosing the pleasure of philosophical conversation with friends over the pursuit of physical pleasures like food, drink, and sex. Aim of the Epicurean ethics is not the positive pursuit of pleasure or cravings but rather the absence of pain, a neutral state called 'ataraxia' which is freedom from all worry, often translated simply as 'inner tranquillity.' This is the most ideal stage of happiness in Epicurean ethics which can be achieved through philosophical/intellectual contemplation rather than through pursuit of crass physical pleasures. This would also imply that happiness is not an individual or private affair, but can be achieved more readily in a society where like-minded individuals come together to help one bring another's pursuit of happiness.

According to Epicureanism, the highest good is not endless enjoyment of sensory pleasures as it is the case in the Cyrenaic, rather, an absence of suffering and disturbance. The highest good/happiness is turning away from the external world. The epicureans upheld that pursuit of tranquility is the foundation for moral action and judgment. To achieve this inner peace, Epicurus promoted cultivating prudence, justice and friendship. He believed that leading a moral life and curbing impulses and instincts only would ultimately result in a happier and contented existence. Epicureanism emphasised the importance of friendship, social connection and harmony as a source of pleasure and prized both their inherent worth and their power to ease anxiety and increase happiness. Epicurus believed that genuine and meaningful relationship based on mutual trust and shared values will reduce anxiety, contribute to inner peace and happiness by providing emotional support and companionships and will enhance overall well-being.

The type of pleasure which Epicurus favoured is distinct from the hedonistic pursuit of momentary and fleeting pleasure. Epicurus separated static and dynamic types of pleasures. While

- Static pleasure is superior to kinetic pleasure

kinetic joys result from satisfying cravings or appetites, static pleasures require the absence of pain and physical discomfort. Epicurus believed that kinetic pleasure was inferior to static pleasures such as tranquillity and peaceful mind.

- Prudent consideration of the consequences of pleasure

The essence of Epicurean hedonism is the conviction that finding inner peace and being free from pointless suffering is the ultimate purpose of life. Instead of indulging in fleeting pleasures, pleasure in this setting is characterised by the absence of suffering and disturbances. Epicurus thought that to obtain this condition of pleasure, people should exercise ‘prudence’ in their decision-making, which entails using reason and wisdom to ascertain what really leads to long-term well-being and avoiding irrational or excessive desires. In short, even when he promoted seeking pleasures, Epicurus stressed a prudent consideration of consequences of pleasures which would enable the agent to attain the greatest possible amount of pleasure in the whole course of the life. “In particular, the prudent man will avoid those intense but momentary pleasures, like the pleasures of debauchery, which result in a great deal of disturbance to the pleasant tenor of a calm existence.” This is in sheer contrast to the Cyrenaic philosophy that humans should seek the pleasure of each moment as it passes without consideration of future consequences.

- Pleasure in absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul

Epicurus states: “When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and the aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality... By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking bouts and of revelry, not sexual lust, not the enjoyment of fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, that produces a pleasant life. It is rather sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs that lead to the tumult of the soul.”

2.3.4 Stoicism: Virtue and Inner Peace

- Stoicism and Epicureanism as contemporary philosophical streams

Stoicism was founded in Athens by ancient Greek philosopher Zeno of Citium (modern day Cyprus) in 300 B.C.E and was originated as a Hellenistic philosophy as a contemporary to Epicureanism. Stoicism and hedonism represent two distinct philosophical traditions with different fundamental principles and aims. While both philosophies concern themselves with human well-being and ethical conduct, they approach these topics from contrasting perspectives.

- Socratic influence on stoicism
- Attain good life by aligning your acts and thoughts with the rational order of the cosmos

Stoicism was influenced by Socrates and the Cynics and it took philosophical legacy from both. According to Bertrand Russell, what was the best in the Cynic doctrine passed over into Stoicism which then became a more complete and pointed philosophy. The Cynics and Cyrenaics had something in common in their attempt to make the individual moral life self-sufficient by propagating a moral code independent of society and tied only to the individual's choices and decisions. The Stoic school, founded by Zeno and later refined by Roman thinkers like Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, propagated that growing virtue and gaining inner peace by aligning one's acts and thoughts with the logical order of the cosmos leads to a good and fulfilling life. The stoic ethical principles are deeply intertwined with their psychological and metaphysical doctrines. Stoics perceive the universe not as a mere mechanistic sequence of causes and effects but as a coherent and rational system - a harmonious and orderly whole in which each part serves a purpose in relation to the entirety, operating in concert for the collective welfare.

- Goodness is inherent in nature

Stoics emphasised that goodness is inherent in nature, as the laws of morality align with the rational order of the universe and are understandable through human reason. They cautioned against prioritising desires for pleasure, recognising that such desires often lead individuals away from rational living and inner peace. By emphasising the importance of rational knowledge, the Stoics can be viewed as true disciples of Socrates who valued reason as the pathway to virtue and fulfilment.

- Life according nature is also the life according to reason

Stoics affirmed that law of nature has been known by reason. William Lille states: "From the Stoics down to Clarke, they have held that the law of nature has been known by reason, and that the life according to nature is also the life according to reason. Some have held explicitly that it is the fact of the moral law of nature being reasonable that makes it worthy of our obedience. In other words, the moral law is not a scientific law like the law of gravitation, but a logical law like the law of contradiction."

According to the Stoics, life according to nature is a life lived in full consciousness and awareness of what is rational and consequently right. The Stoics found the good life in the avoidance of feeling, inner tranquility and the rational pursuit of duty. They emphasised that goodness is inherent in nature, as the laws of morality align with the rational order of

- Stoicism advises against pleasure-seeking

the universe, making them comprehensible to human reason. Recognising that the pursuit of pleasure often leads individuals away from rational living, Stoicism advises against prioritising pleasure-seeking. Instead, Stoics emphasised the importance of cultivating virtue and aligning one's actions with reason and duty for a fulfilling and meaningful life.

- Act in accordance with principle known to reason

William Lillie explains the philosophical difference between Epicureanism and Stoicism and sheds light on their impact on the modern philosophy: "We have in the Epicureans and the Stoics two ways of looking at the moral life. The Epicureans held that good things are those that satisfy our human desires, and particularly the desire for pleasure; this is the fundamental view of the moralists called Utilitarians in modern times. The Stoics held that a good action is an action done in accordance with some principle known to reason; this is the view of Kant and the many moralists influenced by him in modern times."

- Stoicism and its great role model in Socrates

Bertrand Russell demonstrates how the stoics had found their great role model in Socrates and his philosophical approach to the life. Russell states: "Socrates was the chief saint of the Stoics throughout their history; his attitude at the time of his trial, his refusal to escape, his calmness in the face of death, and his contention that the perpetrator of injustice injures himself more than his victim, all fitted in perfectly with Stoic teaching. So did his indifference to heat and cold, his plainness in matters of food and dress, and his complete independence of all bodily comforts."

Summarised Overview

Greek hedonism is referred to a spectrum of philosophical perspectives on pleasure and the good life ranging from the immediate gratification and sensory pleasure advocated by the Cyrenaics to the refined pursuit of mental well-being and virtue/ inner-tranquillity promoted by Epicureanism and Stoicism respectively. In general, all these schools prioritise pleasure as a fundamental aspect of the good/moral life while their concept of pleasure/happiness is different and distinct. Cyrenaicism believes that pleasure should be sought in the present moment without concern for future consequences, emphasising the fleeting nature of pleasure. However, this hedonistic approach was refined by Epicurus, who established Epicureanism as a distinct philosophical system. Epicurus emphasises mental well-being and long-term tranquility over momentary pleasures, asserting that true happiness arises from the absence of pain and mental disturbance. Epicureanism promotes a moderate and restrained pursuit of pleasure such as mental and intellectual pleasures prioritising simple pleasures such as friendship, contemplation, and the satisfaction of natural needs. In contrast to these hedonistic philosophies, Stoicism offered a different perspective on the good life. Stoics prioritise virtue as the highest good, advocating for a life guided by reason and moral integrity. While Stoics acknowledge the importance of pleasure and pain, they believe that true happiness arises from living in accordance with nature and the rational order of the universe. Stoicism teaches acceptance of external events and the cultivation of inner tranquillity, emphasising self-discipline, self-control, calmness and resilience in the face of adversity and promotes development of the character virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and moderation.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the basic principle of hedonism is centred on?
2. How Epicurean hedonism is different from Cyrenaic hedonism?
3. Discuss Stoicism

Assignments

1. Epicureanism promotes long lasting pleasures such as intellectual pleasure over sensual/physical pleasures. Elucidate.
2. Stoicism uphold the inner peace and tranquillity as the ultimate pleasure. Discuss.

3. Critically evaluate William Lillie's statement about Stoics: "The Stoics taught explicitly that goodness is natural, for the laws of morality are the laws of nature, perfectly rational and so comprehensible to human reason. As the desire for pleasure was of all things the most likely to lead men away from rational living, this was to be altogether avoided."

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4. William B, (1972). *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Suggested Reading

1. Sinha, Jadu Nath (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. New Central Book Agency.
2. Russell, Batrand (2016). *A History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

BLOCK 3
Modern Ethics

UNIT 1

Utilitarianism: Bentham, Mill, and Spencer

Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- know the concept of hedonism and its forms
- understand the idea of utilitarianism and its criticisms
- examine Bentham's quantitative Utilitarianism and hedonistic calculus
- analyze Mill's qualitative Utilitarianism and its difference from Bentham's Utilitarianism

Background

The roots of Utilitarianism can be traced back to ancient thought. Traditionally, we can see that Plato viewed welfare as the greatest balance of pleasure over pain. In Plato's *Protagoras*, we find traces of a concern for welfare, its measurement, and its maximization. In Socrates also we find the welfarist view of hedonism when he held that only pleasurable states of mind are valuable. Hence, we can say that Utilitarianism, in its classical form was welfarist consequentialism. Later Stoics and Aristotle also began to develop a notion of impartiality according to which self-concern extended rationally to others and eventually to the whole world. In the modern period, the idea of impartial maximization is found in the philosophy of Francis Hutcheson. Hume also stressed the importance to ethics of utility. Later we find the idea of God required to promote the greatest happiness in the works of 'theological Utilitarians,' like Joseph Priestly and William Paley. The political theory of Utilitarianism was advocated by Claude Helvetius in France when he put forward the theory that task if the Government is to produce happiness for the people. The trends of Utilitarianism discussed above was systematized by Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill who were followed by Henry Sidgwick and Rashdall. A recent version of Utilitarianism was developed by R.M. Hare.

Keywords

Hedonism, Utilitarianism, Intrinsic value, Psychological hedonism, Moral sanction, Consequentialism.

Discussion

3.1.1 Hedonism

- Pleasure is the ultimate good of life

Hedonism is a theory which states that pleasure is the ultimate good or the supreme end of life. The word hedonism is derived from the Greek word ‘*hedone*’ which means pleasure. The metaphysical foundation of hedonist theory is that self is sentient and that aim of life is pleasure. According to them, the self is a mere chain of instincts, feelings, and sensations and reason is a means of satisfying passions. Thus, human’s solitary duty is the fulfilment or satisfaction of his/her passions for which reason helps.

- Psychological hedonism is a description of the human nature

Hedonism has mainly two forms; psychological and ethical. Psychological Hedonism holds that pleasure is the natural and normal object of desire and that we always seek pleasure and avoid pain. William Lillie says: “Men may appear to seek such other things as wealth or learning or virtuous characters, but actually they are seeking such things as means to getting pleasure.” Psychological hedonism is a description of human nature learned by empirical observation in contrast to the Ethical hedonism which holds that pleasure is the proper object of desire and that we do not always seek pleasure but *ought to seek* pleasure. Former is a statement of an actual fact while the latter is a statement of an ideal or end. Hedonists like Bentham and J.S. Mill base ethical hedonism on psychological hedonism while Sidgwick rejects psychological hedonism and advocates ethical hedonism. For Sidgwick, pleasure is the reasonable object of our desire.

According to J. Sinha, ethical hedonism assumes two forms: gross and refined. The gross egoistic hedonism considers all pleasures alike in kind and they differ only in intensity or degree. It does not consider any qualitative difference among them. Epicurus propounded refined egoistic hedonism and

- Two forms of hedonism: Psychological hedonism and ethical hedonism

held that reason has an important place in our moral life. He gave preeminence to the intellectual pleasures over the physical pleasures because of their comparative freedom from pain and greater durability, though he does not distinctly recognise the qualitative superiority of the former over the latter as J.S. Mill did later.

3.1.1.1 Ethical Hedonism

- Ethical hedonism asserts that the goodness of an action is determined by its contribution to personal happiness

Ethical hedonism considers pleasure as the only the standard of goodness. Pleasure is the only quality that determines whether an action is good, or to say, pleasure alone has any relevance to the goodness of the action. In other words, it affirms that a good action would lead to a pleasant experience. Ethical hedonism is the theory of ethics regarding us how humans ought to act and what they ought to desire. There are two kinds of ethical hedonism; Egoistic ethical hedonism which holds that each individual ought to seek his/her own maximum pleasure and universalistic ethical hedonism or utilitarianism which holds that each individual ought to seek the maximum pleasure of all human beings. William Lillie talks about universalistic ethical hedonism as follows: “Ethical hedonism holds that pleasantness is the only quality because of which an experience is good or valuable. A good action is an action which leads to a pleasant experience as its consequence, and the right action at any moment is the one which will lead to more pleasant experiences or, as we commonly say, to greater pleasure than any other action which is possible for the agent at that particular moment.”

- Egoistic ethical hedonism does not take into account the pleasantness of other people

Egoistic ethical hedonism holds that the right action is that action which brings the greatest possible amount of pleasantness to the doer of the action. According to this view, other consequences of the action, including the point that the action causes pain or unpleasantness to other people are irrelevant to its rightness. In short according to this view, the sole moral duty of humans is to act such actions which will bring the greatest amount of pleasantness for oneself throughout his/her life.

3.1.1.2 Gross or Quantitative Utilitarianism of Bentham

Bentham, in his theory, attempted a compromise between psychological and ethical hedonism. In the very beginning of his famous book, Bentham says: “Nature has placed man-

- Moral theory of Bentham combines psychological and ethical hedonism

kind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pleasure and pain. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do as well as what we shall do.” The first part of this statement supports ethical hedonism and the second part supports psychological hedonism. Thus, according to Bentham, human always wants to attain pleasure and abstain from pain and this constitutes to his/her ethical duty. Bentham holds that man is naturally selfish and that behind every act of selfish service, there is some selfish aim. Human helps another only if he/she stands to profit by it. Accordingly, Bentham holds that at the base of all human motivation is the principle of self-preference. Duty, law and good qualities have importance in terms of pleasure and pain. However, Bentham himself is an advocate of selflessness in the sense that the highest ethical ideal is the maximum pleasure of humanity. The aim of life is social pleasure and not individual pleasure and the standard of morality is group pleasure or happiness. The distinctions of class, caste, etc., are wrong. The pleasure which is good is that which betters the group. However, this general pleasure does not eliminate individual pleasure, it is rather kept safe in a similar and unprejudiced form. In this way, Bentham accepts the principle of equity and impartiality.

- Gross Utilitarianism asserts that all pleasures are considered equal in quantity

Bentham is a Utilitarian who supports selfless hedonism. The principle of Utilitarianism accepts or rejects every action according to the tendency of that action by increasing or decreasing the pleasure or pain of the people whose interests are conjoined with it. That means, utility is the standard of morality. It is also the real ultimate motivation of actions. According to Bentham, the question of quality is meaningless and he affirms that being equal in quantity, all pleasures are similar. Bentham’s Utilitarianism may be called gross or sensualistic, because he does not admit qualitative differences among pleasures. For him, any one pleasure is as good as another provided they are equal in quantity. He says: “Quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry.” We must bear in mind that Bentham does not mean by purity any superior quality but merely freedom from pain. Pleasure is pure, according to Bentham, when it is unmixed with pain.

3.1.2 Hedonistic Calculus

Bentham believes that pleasures are capable of being measured. He says: “Weigh pleasures and weigh pains, and as

- Weighing and calculating pleasures and pains

the balance stands will stand the question of right and wrong.” Bentham wanted a standard which was hard and solid, and also away from personal thoughts and feelings. In this discussion, he was much impressed by the principle of mathematical calculus. It was his understanding that pleasure can be measured similar to the length of a room. While other hedonists conceived of two dimensions for the measurement of quality, duration and intensity, Bentham conceived of five dimensions. He held accordingly that it is essential to understand these seven dimensions if quantitative measurement is to be understood.

- Bentham’s Hedonistic Calculus measures pleasures through seven dimensions for quantitative evaluation.

The seven dimensions which are known as Bentham’s Hedonistic Calculus or moral arithmetics are: intensity, duration, nearness, certainty, purity or lack of pain, fruitfulness or that which produces other pleasures, and extent to or the number of people who profit by it. Bentham holds that the only standard of valuation of pleasures is quantitative and quantity takes different forms. It has seven dimensions of value, viz., (1) intensity, (2) duration, (3) proximity, (4) certainty, (5) purity (freedom from pain), (6) fecundity (fruitfulness), and (7) extent i.e., the number of persons affected. One pleasure is more intense than another. The more intense pleasure is preferable to a less intense pleasure. Also, one pleasure is more durable than another. Of pleasures which are equal otherwise, the more durable pleasure is preferable to a less durable pleasure. Likewise, a proximate pleasure is preferable to a pleasure which is remote. A certain pleasure is preferable to an uncertain pleasure. A pleasure is said to be pure when that is free from pain and such a pleasure is more preferable to an impure pleasure. A pleasure is said to have fecundity when it produces a number of other pleasures. A fecund pleasure is preferable to a barren pleasure which does not give rise to other pleasure. The pleasure may be enjoyed by a small number of people or a by large number of people. A pleasure which is having a greater extent is preferable to that one which is having a less extent.

By weighing the quantity of any pleasure following to these seven dimensions, we can compare it with part of any other. According to Bentham, the one yielding more pleasure can be accepted as superior. Here, the dimension of extent is important, because by accepting it, Bentham passes from selfishness to selflessness. According to J. Sinha, “Bentham accounts for the transition from egoism to altruism in the following manner. He explains it by means of four external sanctions, physi-

- External sanctions like physical, political, social, and religious influences lead to the shift from egoism to altruism.

cal or natural sanction, political sanction, social sanction, and religious sanction. They operate through the pleasures and pains caused by nature, the State, the society, and God to an individual and, compel him to be altruistic.” Thus, according to Bentham, the individual passes from egoism to altruism under the pressure of external sanctions and the moral obligation arises due to these external sanctions.

3.1.3 Criticisms against Bentham’s Gross Utilitarianism

Many arguments have been advanced against the Gross Utilitarianism of Bentham. The major ones are as follows:

- Psychological Hedonism is defective: Bentham’s hedonism is based on psychological hedonism, thus involves all its defects.
- There is no way of passing from selfishness to selflessness: Bentham held that man is selfish and then tried to burden him with selflessness. But, if selfishness and selflessness are two completely contradictory elements, any attempt to make a compromise between them is futile. The organization of selflessness from pure selfishness is impossible. Despite this, Bentham has a place for the dimension of extent in his Hedonistic Calculus. But he does not succeed in giving any logical argument for the passage from selfishness to selflessness.
- It is wrong to call external sanctions ‘moral:’ Ethical orders are internal orders, not external pressures. Any activity done with a view to pleasure or profit or due to pressure cannot be ethical. It is merely the inspiration of prudence, and it has no moral obligation. Thus, activity done under physical, political, social or religious sanction cannot be ethical.
- Gross Hedonism: By not accepting any qualitative distinction, Bentham has made his theory gross and sensual. To accept only the distinctions of consequences is to put all pleasures on the same footing. This makes both physical and mental or intellectual pleasures similar. Critics have objected to this so strongly such that Carlyle has called it ‘Pig Philosophy.’
- Hedonistic Calculus is totally impractical: All pleasures are changeable according to a human’s circumstances. Anything that gives pleasure today can give pain tomorrow.

row. The object yielding pleasure to one may cause pain to another. Besides, pleasure cannot be measured at the time of feeling and nothing valid can be known by measuring it on the basis of memory. Thus, how to decide which of the sanctions is superior when there is a conflict between them? A division of pleasure among people detracts from its intensity. In such a condition, is intensity or its extent superior? Bentham has no answer to all these questions.

- The dimension of extent does not fit in Bentham's theory: The dimension of extent is a foreign element in the Selfish Hedonism of Bentham. Bentham is definitely Utilitarian but he does not succeed in clarifying his Utilitarianism.
- It is fallacious to treat selfishness and selflessness as mutually exclusive: Bentham's fundamental mistake lies in treating selfishness and selflessness as mutually exclusive. Selflessness as much as selfishness is an eternal quality of human beings.

3.1.4 Mills' Qualitative Utilitarianism

- Mill follows Bentham's Utilitarian principle with conditions.

Mill found his school of utilitarianism on Bentham's principle that utility or maximum happiness is the basis of morality. He also affirmed that an action is morally right only if it produces at least much good for all people affected by it. The Utilitarian slogan "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" emphasised wide distribution of human pleasure as well as its maximum enjoyment.

Mill's utilitarianism differs from that of Bentham in the following respects:

- Qualitative distinction in tendencies: Bentham does not admit any difference in tendencies but Mill classified human tendencies and, by virtue of qualitative differences, he viewed that some are noble and others are base. In this way, he said that intellectual tendencies are far superior to physiological tendencies.
- Qualitative distinction in pleasures: In the same way, Mill made qualitative distinctions among different pleasures. According to Bentham, all pleasures are similar.
- Differences in the assumptions about human nature: Mill and Bentham differed in their assumptions about human

- Mill emphasizes qualitative differences in pleasures and prioritizes the intellectual pursuits to purely physical ones

nature. Bentham did not look upon human being as anything better than animal. According to him, human being is always in search of pleasure. Pleasures do not have qualitative distinctions. In contrast to that, according to Mill, human being is not merely an animal, rather, he is superior to animals. He has intellect, and his intellectual pleasure is superior to sensual pleasure. Human being's importance is due to his intellect. He does not run blind-folded after pleasures. He makes qualitative distinctions in pleasures.

- Difference in ethical principle: The ethical principles of Mill and Bentham also differ. According to Bentham, human being should carry out activities yielding the maximum pleasure without making qualitative distinctions. According to Mill, he/she is not to become an animal. His humanity is valuable. It is creditable to the human being even by despising sensual pleasure. Human being's duty is to attain high qualities and nobler pleasures.

- Mill's view of pleasure

As a hedonist, Mill uses pleasure and happiness as synonymous. He does not distinguish one from the other. He regards virtue, health, etc., as means to happiness and does not regard them as intrinsic values. In short, Mill upholds the hedonistic criterion of right and wrong; an action is right if it yields pleasure or excess of pleasure over pain and an action is wrong if it gives pain or excess of pain over pleasure. That is, rightness consists in conduciveness to pleasure and wrongness consists in conduciveness to pain.

Mill's account of Utilitarianism may be summed up as follows:

- Pleasure is the only thing that is desirable.
- The only proof that a thing is desirable is the fact that people desire it.
- Each person's own happiness is good to that person. So, general happiness is good to everybody.
- Human beings do desire other objects. But, they desire them only as a means to pleasure.
- If one of the two pleasures is preferred by those who are completely acquainted with both, the preferred pleasure is superior in quality.

- Mill's qualitative Utilitarianism and Bentham's quantitative Utilitarianism

J.S. Mill recognises the various kinds of pleasure or the qualitative difference of pleasures. He, for the first time, introduces the distinction of quality of pleasure. Sinha states: "Epicurus emphasized the distinction between the pleasures of our body and those of the mind and gave superiority to the latter on account of their greater durability and their comparative freedom from painful consequences. But he did not recognize the qualitative superiority of the mental pleasures. To Bentham also all pleasures are in kind the same. Though Bentham recognizes purity of pleasures, he does not mean by its qualitative superiority, but freedom from pain." Mill thus makes a distinction of quality independent of quantity and holds that the qualitative distinction is as real as the quantitative. Hence, Mill's Utilitarianism is known as qualitative Utilitarianism which is contrasted with Bentham's quantitative Utilitarianism.

3.1.5 Criticism against Mills' Qualitative Utilitarianism

- Mill's theory and Hedonism

The theory of Mill has been criticised on various grounds. They are as follows:

- Mill's view of happiness

- Arguments against Hedonism: Mill's theory being hedonistic, all the arguments against hedonism apply to it. Hedonism becomes partial due to its excessive emphasis only on the sentient aspect of human life. In the overall complete satisfaction of the self, the satisfaction of both reason and feeling is necessary.
- Difference between pleasure and happiness: Mill treated happiness as the ultimate goal but then made a blunder by calling it pleasure. There is a difference between pleasure and happiness. Dewey makes a distinction between pleasure and happiness. According to him, pleasure is transitory and relative, that is, enduring as long as some specific activity endures, and having reference only to that specific activity. However, "happiness is permanent and universal. It results only when the act satisfies all the interests of the self-concerned, or will lead to no conflict, either present or remote. Happiness is the feeling of the whole self, as opposed to the feeling of some one aspect of the self." Happiness is the result of a compounding of pleasures.
- Defects of Psychological Hedonism: As it is based on psychological hedonism, Mill's theory becomes liable to all these objections which have been advanced against psy-

hological hedonism.

- Contradictions

- Psychological Hedonism and Utilitarianism

- Desire and desirable

- Ethical quality

- Principles contrary to Psychological Hedonism: Some of Mill's principles run contrary to his psychological hedonism. According to Mill, fame, wealth, good qualities, etc., are originally means but they themselves become ends in the end. If this is true, then this theory is disproved that man always wants pleasure.
- Contradiction between Psychological Hedonism and Utilitarianism: Psychological Hedonism and Utilitarianism are two mutually contradictory theories. There is no way of passing from selfishness to unselfishness. On the one hand, Mill concedes human being's natural yearning for pleasure, and on the other hand, he makes Utilitarianism the ultimate aim. He oscillates between social and individual pleasures. It becomes impossible to pass from individual to social good as selfishness and unselfishness are treated as mutually contradictory.
- Fallacy of figure of speech: The logic presented in favor of Ethical Hedonism by Mill is blemished by the fallacy of figure of speech. That which can be desired is not necessarily desirable. Desirable means that which ought to be desired. Each object of our desire is not desirable. The word desirable should be applied to an object which seems right to reason. As Mackenzie views, when we say that anything is desirable, usually we do not merely mean "that it is able to be desired. There is scarcely anything that is not able to be desired. What we mean is rather that it is reasonable to desire it, or that it ought to be desired." Dewey and Tufts also lend Meckenzie their support. In Moore's view, "The fact is that desirable does not mean 'able to be desired' as 'visible' means 'able to be seen.' The desirable simply means what ought to be desired or deserves to be desired, just as the detestable means not what can be but what ought to be detested and the damnable what deserves to be damned."
- Qualitative distinctions are contrary to Hedonism: Quality is ethical quality and to look upon qualitative distinctions as the criterion of desirability is to mean that the determinant of right and wrong is morality, not pleasure. Qualitative distinctions are inconsistent with psychological hedonism. If we make quality the criterion, it means that we want quality, not pleasure. As Rashdall puts it, "A desire for superior quality of pleasure is not really a desire for

pleasure.” Qualitative distinctions lead in the direction of perfectionism.

- Many criticisms have been raised against Mill’s utilitarianism.

- Human’s sense of dignity goes against Hedonism

- Aggregation of pleasure is not possible

- Pleasure and service

- Judgment of capable judges is the judgement of reason: The capable judges will judge either by reason or by feeling. By judging with the latter, their decisions will be different because feeling is based upon personal interest. They will achieve concurrence in their judgments only by judging with reason. Secondly, Mill asserts that these judges have experienced both kinds of pleasures and are consequently capable of judging the superior of them. This work of distinguishing between different feelings and judging is the province of reason.
- Human sense of dignity contradicts Hedonism: Green says that sense of dignity is not desire of pleasure. As Mill would have it, a human being would not like to become an animal for the enjoyment of pleasure. This means that humanity is superior to pleasure. Mill says that a dissatisfied man is better than a satisfied pig and dissatisfied Socrates is superior to a satisfied man. It is obvious that to be satisfied and foolish is worse than to be dissatisfied and intelligent. Thus, working according to reason is superior to the fulfilment of desire. In this way, adopting a ‘sense of dignity,’ Mill abandons Hedonism and comes to rationalism.
- Fallacy of Composition: The logic of Ethical Hedonism given by Mill is guilty of the fallacy of composition. According to Mill, the pleasure of an individual is good for him and it, therefore, follows that the pleasure of everybody is good for everybody. In the words of Mackenzie, “It is forgotten that neither the pleasures nor the person is capable of being made into an aggregate. A sum of pleasure is not pleasure; any more than a sum of man is man.”
- Hedonism cannot be altruistic: Mill presented a great ideal by including social Utilitarianism into his theory. But, this ideal then does not remain hedonistic. Hedonism cannot be altruistic. In the words of Marineau, “there is no road from each to himself to each for all.” If one desires their own pleasure as natural and their ultimate aim is search for pleasure, then there is no reason why they should be of service to others.
- Fallacious description of sympathy and brotherliness: The description of the feelings of sympathy and brotherliness put forth by Mill is incorrect. According to Mill, the personal pleasure can be relative to service of others, but the

- Altruistic motive is natural

- Intellectualistic instead of hedonistic

- Qualities cannot be estimated against quantities

altruistic feeling can never intrude into this pleasure. In fact, the altruistic motive is natural to man as the motive of selfishness. According to Rashdall, “Human beings and animals have always possessed both the instincts of race preservation and self-preservation. In developed human beings, altruism develops from social and race preservation instincts and egoism from self-preservation instincts.”

- Internal orders lead in the direction of Intellectualism: By the assimilation of internal order, Mill’s theory becomes intellectualistic instead of hedonistic. Mill explains the internal conscience as ‘the feeling of the pain attendant on the violation of duty.’ This repentance is due to violation of duty and the violation of duty implies the violation of moral or intellectual laws. In this way, internal orders are the voice of reason. At some places, Mill treats it as corresponding to sympathy, brotherliness, feeling of unity with all human being, etc. But morality cannot be subjective and nor can subjective feeling be the criterion of morality. In this way, the internal conscience (or order) voices the reason, all other external orders being useless for morality.
- Contradiction between quality and quantity: By assimilating quality into Bentham’s quantitative Moral Arithmetic, Mill’s utilitarianism becomes more impractical. Quantity cannot be judged by qualities and qualities cannot be evaluated by quantity either. Then, how can the value combining quality and quantity of the object be compared to the value combining quality and quantity of some other object? In the words of Mackenzie, “Qualities cannot be estimated against quantities, unless in some way, they can be reduced to quantities - and this, on Mills’ supposition is not the case.” The very theory of the calculation of pleasures does not make sense. Neither individual nor social pleasures lend themselves to measurement. Pleasure is a feeling which cannot be measured regarding either quantity or value because feeling is changeable according to time, place, and the person.

3.1.6 Spencer’s Evolutionary Hedonism

Empirical hedonism, as advocated by Bentham and J.S. Mill, finds its counterpart in evolutionary hedonism, a concept championed by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). In his work, *The Data of Ethics*, Herbert Spencer introduced a new moral philosophy by applying the principles of the theory of

- Morality is not static but evolutionary

evolution to morality and made a significant departure in ethical discourse. Spencer posited that the origins of morality can be traced back to the behaviours of animals, where moral principles began to take shape and evolve. His fundamental argument is that morality is not static, rather it is subject to development and growth, much like biological evolution itself. Spencer also emphasised that we should acknowledge the unknown endpoints and origins of this evolutionary process, thereby advocating for a historical approach to understanding the evolution of morality.

- Evolution shapes morality

Spencer inferred moral laws, drawing upon biological principles and contrasted them with the approach of Bentham and Mill, who derived moral laws from the empirical observation of pleasure and pain. The evolutionary hedonism posited that the laws of biological evolution inherently support hedonism. Spencer asserted that the task of moral science is to deduce the actions which inevitably lead to happiness or sadness from the rules governing existence. This rational hedonism is centred on the belief that evolution has shaped morality, and understanding morality necessitates accounting for evolutionary processes.

- Pleasure and pain serve primarily as biological indicators

Like his counterpart in empirical hedonism, Spencer's framework for ethics is also the assessment of pleasure and pain. Spencer viewed that pain is indicative of a decline in life and pleasure as indicative of its enhancement by drawing on evolutionary principles. In other words, pleasure and pain serve as biological indicators, with pleasure correlating to actions conducive to welfare of an organism and pain correlating to actions harmful to it. He also upheld the view that only races of sentient beings that paired desirable sentiments with life-preserving behaviours could have survived and highlighted the evolutionary necessity of pleasure-seeking and pain-avoidance tendencies in human beings.

- Biological and moral benefits of pleasure

Evolutionary hedonism extends itself to the observation that pleasure and pain influence the longevity of life forms. Spencer contended that pleasure promotes life, while suffering impedes it, emphasising the inherent biological and moral benefits of pleasure. By equating pleasure with life advancement and suffering with obstruction, Spencer underscores the imperative of pleasure-seeking behaviors for the preservation and flourishing of life. Thus, pleasure, in Spencer's view, emerges as both morally and biologically beneficial, aligning with the overarching principles of evolutionary utilitarianism.

Summarised Overview

Hedonism is an ethical theory according to which '*hedone*' or pleasure is the ultimate standard of morality. Pleasure is the highest good. Utilitarianism is one form of hedonism which upholds a utility viewpoint. The utilitarianism takes two forms such as quantitative and qualitative utilitarianism. Bentham is the proponent of the former and that is called gross Utilitarianism. J.S. Mill is the proponent of the latter and that is called refined Utilitarianism. While he followed Bentham's utilitarian principle, Mill applied the concept of quality in Bentham's utilitarianism. While Bentham argued that pleasure can be calculated, Mill took a step ahead and provided a more refined and sensitive defense of doctrine of Utilitarianism by arguing that pleasures can be qualitatively different. Spencer while advocating for evolutionary hedonism and evolutionary utilitarianism, argued that pleasure and pain serve primarily as biological indicators not only as moral indicators. He affirmed that laws of biological evolution inherently support hedonism and inferred moral laws from biological principles.

Self-Assessment

1. What is evolutionary hedonism or evolutionary utilitarianism?
2. Elucidate the different forms of ethical hedonism
3. Who propounded Gross Utilitarianism?

Assignments

1. Critically examine the moral idea of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.'
2. Bring out the distinction between Bentham's Quantitative and Mill's Qualitative Utilitarianism.
3. Examine the importance of Bentham's Gross Utilitarianism and bring out the criticisms levelled against it.
4. Give a brief account of Bentham's Hedonistic calculus

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UNIT 2

Deontological Theory: Kant

Learning Outcomes

After going through this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the deontological ethics
- examine the rational basis of morality according to Kant
- distinguish between Categorical and hypothetical Imperatives
- understand the features of Kant's Categorical Imperatives and analyse the various criticisms leveled against it
- discuss the postulates of ethics formulated by Kant

Background

Western ethical theories mainly examine ethical frameworks that have shaped moral philosophy in the Western tradition. These theories include Aristotle's Virtue Ethics, John Stuart Mill's Consequentialist Ethics and Immanuel Kant's Deontological Ethics. These three ethical theories offer distinct perspectives on the nature of morality and provide frameworks for ethical decision-making in various contexts. While they differ in their foundations and approaches, each theory contributes to the ongoing discourse on ethics and the search for a moral life. In the previous blocks and units, we already discussed Aristotle's Virtue Ethics and John Stuart Mill's Consequentialist Ethics. In this unit, we are going to discuss Kant's Deontological Ethics.

Kant's ethical standpoint is ontological and regards duty as the fundamental concept of ethics. He was the first person to make the deontological concept central in ethics as he stressed the sense of Duty of a unique moral motive. According to him, it is the only morally good motive and he advocated the principle of 'duty for duty's sake.' But, he affirms that the complete good includes happiness besides virtues. He also advocates that the aim of adhering to moral principle leads to our own perfection in addition to other people's happiness.

Keywords

Categorical Imperative, Hypothetical Imperative, Deontology, Goodwill, Rational ethics, Postulate.

Discussion

3.2.1 Deontological Ethics

- Deontological ethics focuses on intrinsic qualities and Teleological ethics focuses on consequence

Moral theories may be classified in many different ways. One such distinction is between deontological theories and teleological theories. Deontological theory holds that the rightness and wrongness of an action depend on the action itself. Intuitionism is the simplest form of it. The teleological theory holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on the purpose or teleology. Hedonism is an example of it. Deontological ethical theories maintain that the moral rightness or wrongness of an action depends on its intrinsic qualities and not on the nature of its consequences. They hold that at least some acts are morally wrong in themselves like lying, breaking a promise, punishing the innocent, murder, etc. These ethical theories are formulated in such a way that the rightness of an action consists of its conformity to a moral rule or command.

- Deontological ethical theories emphasise the connection between duty and morality

Deontology comes from Greek words '*deon*' which means duty and logos and hence focuses on logic and ethics. In deontological ethics, an action is considered morally good because of some characteristics of the action itself and not because the product of the action is good. It holds that at least some acts are morally obligatory regardless of their consequences for human welfare. Descriptions of such ethics have the expressions like 'duty for duty sake,' 'Virtue is its own reward' and 'let justice be done though the heavens fall.' The first great philosopher to define deontological principles in the 18th century was Immanuel Kant. He held that nothing is good without qualification except a good will, which is one that wills to act in accord with moral law and out of respect for that law, rather

than out of natural inclinations. He also viewed the moral law as a Categorical Imperative.

3.2.2 Rationality as the Basis of Morality

Kant's ethics is based on the search for a single supreme principle of morality. He wanted to find out a principle that has rational authority binding on all rational creatures. According to Piers Benn, Kant was a great system builder. His aim was not merely to produce a moral theory that was internally consistent and which accorded with as many ordinary practical intuitions as possible. It was also to put morality on an entirely rational foundation. He tried to discover *apriori* basis of morality- that is, a foundation for morality in reason alone, independent of contingent human consensus and the attitudes and desires of actual people. His contribution is thus distinctly in opposition to those theories, existing at the time he was writing, which stressed the role of moral sentiment and desire for moral commitment and motivation. Contrary to David Hume, who had argued in his *Treatise of Human Nature* that "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions." Kant argued that "morality and rationality coincided. To be moral is to be rational, to be immoral is to be irrational." Kant approximated an actual truth in treating reason as the most superior. Reason is the solitary element which individualises man. In the same way, a good life will fundamentally be an intellectual life. Self-sacrifice is the first step towards self-realisation but at the same time, it is to be remembered that self-realisation implies the conversion and not repression of the immoral tendencies.

- Kant's ethics pursues a universal moral principle based on rational authority

Kant held that an action is good when it is done on a rational principle i.e., an action is right when it is done from a sense of duty. The most noticeable feature of Kantian ethics is rigorism, which takes two forms. First, Kant does not want to accord a place to emotion in moral life and second, Kant does not allow any exception in moral laws. In Kant's opinion, action allowing any exception is incorrect. A person is undoubtedly immoral if he cries or is pained by another's pain or sorrow because in the process, he increases the weight of sorrow in the world. It is for him to decrease the distress of others and not to be sorrowful at their pain. According to Kant, every act should be done by the motive purely of duty. Besides this, activity carried out with some feeling be it as high or lofty as it

- Actions are good when done from rational principle

may, is rather immoral. Kant did not intend to convey that it is bad for some emotion to accompany the practical reason, his meaning being that the motivation of action should come from reason not from emotion. Thus, this opinion is not irrational asceticism but rational rigorism.

- The supremacy of duty in Kant's ethics

Kant's rigorism is an explicit denial of any exception to rules. But at the same time, it is not utterly devoid of practical value. Actually, it often happens that a person himself does not know his real aim in doing a particular act. His unconscious passions often mislead him and spread doubt in his mind. Thus, to work always with the duty in mind is the best thing. Kant does not put animal tendencies at the level occupied by transcendental and benevolent tendencies. He does not treat these tendencies as moral but still grants them praise-worthiness. It was only after understanding human weakness that he preached 'duty for duty.' Kant held that an action is good when it is done on a rational principle i.e., an action is right when it is done from a sense of duty.

- The Categorical Imperative is the a priori foundation for ethics

Kant's moral philosophy which he presents in his *Foundation of Metaphysics of Moral*, *Critique of Pure Reason*, and *Metaphysics of Moral* may be regarded as an attempt to settle the quarrel between intuitionism and empiricism, idealism and hedonism. His fundamental problem is to discover the meaning of goodness, right and wrong, and duty. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant tries to discover *a priori* principle which ought to govern the will or practical reason and put ethics upon an absolutely certain foundation. The principle that should govern all human conduct is the *a priori* principle, which functions as a command or imperative. It is categorical, meaning it allows for no exceptions. Kant termed it the Categorical Imperative.

3.2.3 Categorical Imperative

- Self-evident, logical principles for moral reasoning

Kant's recognition of the dignity of moral law is well known. He pointed out that "two things fill me with awe- the starry heaven above and the moral law within." His moral law namely the Categorical imperative is given in his most important work, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. According to Kant, this moral law is innate or *a priori*. It comes from within in the form of a Categorical Imperative. These imperatives assert that an action is intrinsically good and morally binding, irrespective of any external factors or personal desires. They serve

as self-evident and logically necessary principles, providing a foundation for moral reasoning and ethical decision-making that is grounded in rationality and objectivity.

- Distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives

Kant also makes a distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives. In his view, hypothetical imperatives dictate actions based on conditions or desired outcomes. These imperatives reflect the practical necessity of performing an action as a means to achieve a specific goal or objective. They suggest that an action is good or necessary only insofar as it serves a particular purpose or end. There are two main types of hypothetical imperatives: problematical and assertorial. Problematical hypothetical imperatives present actions as potentially beneficial for a certain purpose, whether that purpose is actualised or not. They pose a question of whether the action would be beneficial under certain circumstances. On the other hand, assertorial hypothetical imperatives assert that an action is indeed good for a specific purpose, indicating a practical principle based on the assumption of achieving a desired end.

- For Kant, goodwill is the only intrinsic good

Unlike hypothetical imperatives, which are contingent upon achieving specific ends, categorical imperatives are unconditional and universally applicable. They prescribe actions as inherently necessary in themselves, without any reference to external goals or purposes. Kant's first principle of Categorical Imperative is that 'there is nothing in this world or even out of it that can be called good except the good will.' Kant maintains that the good will always obey the Categorical Imperative. By good will, Kant means a firm desire or a fixed purpose to do something good. Kant points out that talents like wisdom, wealth, and intelligence are good only when they are used by good will. When they are used by men of bad will, they lead to moral evils. Good will is good in itself. It is like a jewel which shines by its own light.

Kant believes that any rational being will admit as a self-evident proposition that the only absolutely good thing in the world is a 'good will.' Nothing is absolutely good in this world or out of it except a good will. A good will is good when it is determined by respect for the moral law or the consciousness of duty. An act that is done from self-love or even sympathy is not moral. But a good will that acts solely from respect for duty regards of consequences is good in itself. A good will obeys the Categorical Imperative. A man who is governed by the moral law, and not by his impulses, his selfish desires, his

- Good will achieves autonomy through rational action and fulfilling duty

appetites, is free. The moral imperative is the expression of man's real self. It is a law of our own rational nature. A violation of duty is prompted by contrary feelings and inclinations such as the desire for pleasure would not make a person rational or free. We are only autonomous and free when we act rationally and do our duty. This is Kant's law of Autonomy. The formulation of the Categorical Imperative are as follows:

3.2.3.1 The Maxim of Universalisability

- Act only on that maxim which you can will to become a universal law

'Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.' To clarify this statement, Kant employs the example of promise-breaking. If the practice of breaking promises were to become universal, meaning if everyone started violating promises, then promises would lose their significance altogether. Similarly, while a person in an extreme state of depression may contemplate suicide, this act cannot be considered morally permissible. If everyone were to start committing suicide, there would be no one left to uphold any law.

Criticism:

Kant's **first moral maxim** can be criticised in the following ways:

- Definite moral laws cannot be derived from it - Kant wanted to give moral law a concrete form with this principle but it failed to perform this task. They critiques argue that the morality of an action cannot be solely determined by its maxim's universalisability but must also take into account the unique contexts and consequences of actions. Therefore, the Maxim of Universalisability fails to provide concrete moral laws that adequately address the complexities of real-life moral dilemmas.
- Rigorism- This law does not grant license for any exceptions and therefore becomes rigorous. As Jacobi had said, 'the law is made for the sake of man and not man for sake of law.'
- Sometimes exceptions are rules- It seems to have evaded Kant that sometimes the exceptions are the best rules. If all the citizens of a nation become martyrs, then where will the nation be? The superiority of martyrdom lies in

the fact that everyone cannot be a martyr.

- d. Impractical- The specialty of this maxim is that it stresses the social aspect of ethics but being formal, it becomes impractical.

3.2.3.2 Maxim of Human Dignity

- Treat everyone always as an end and not merely as a means

Kant's second maxim is – 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, always as an end, and never as a means.' This law does not allow any one the privilege or right of committing suicide. Suicide is wrong because the person who commits it does not give due respect to his intrinsic humanity and treats himself merely as a means to enjoyment of pleasure. In the same way, it would be incorrect for a student to terminate his studies at the command of his parents because, in doing so, he makes himself the means to the satisfaction of the desire of his parents. Again, no man has the right to allow others to exploit him. Deception is wrong because the deceiver misleads others and exploit them as a means to his own ends. We should respect our own personality and the personality of others.

- Should focus on self-improvement and contribute to others' happiness

Thus, from the above law, Kant derives a corollary- 'Try always to perfect thy self, and to conduce to the happiness of others, by bringing about favourable circumstances as you cannot make others perfect. For the attainment of perfection, will-power and self-control are needed and no one can control another and induce perfection. One can only create or increase favourable circumstances that can contribute to enhance their happiness and perfection.

Criticism:

- Under certain conditions, individuals can be treated as a means for the greater good

Kant's second moral maxim is important because it preaches respect for our own and others' personalities. Everyone will agree with the fact that it is immoral to reduce any others personality to the level of a means to one's own end but notwithstanding this, some exceptions will have to be admitted. Some people sacrifice even their lives for the propagation of knowledge, defense of the country and the search of truth and consequently use themselves as means to the increase of others knowledge and preservation of their lives. But who would call these people immoral? In the same way, it sometimes becomes necessary to employ some as means to the benefit of

others. For example, in case of contagious diseases it becomes necessary to isolate the diseases. They are used as means to the benefit of others in this way. But no one would brand it as immoral.

- self-sacrifice can aid self-advancement

Actually, the only thing implied in the denial of man's use as a means is that everyone should be directed towards self-improvement and that none should be hindered in his endeavor. But sometimes it is self-sacrifice which is of assistance in this self-advancement. Thus, it cannot be made a law that it is always immoral to use one self or others as means. The corollary to this law does support perfectionism but it is difficult to understand how man can be perfect in the absence of sensibility.

3.2.3.3 The Maxim of Autonomy

- Universal principles binding for all rational beings

Kant's third moral maxim is – 'Act as a member of a kingdom of ends.' This imperative relates our actions with the laws established by an ideal moral legislature. Kant posits the existence of a hypothetical moral community, or 'kingdom of ends,' where rational beings legislate moral principles that govern their conduct. By adhering to these laws, individuals fulfill their moral duty and contribute to the ethical framework of this ideal community. It also asserts that these laws must be universal, applying equally to all rational wills, including our own. Kant emphasises the universality of moral principles, highlighting that they are not contingent upon individual preferences or circumstances but are binding for all rational beings.

- The Kingdom of Ends, represents an ideal state of complete mutual harmony

Thus, people who follow it are in a state of complete mutual harmony. A moral kingdom is a perfect kingdom. In it all the members look upon themselves and others as individuals in all personal and social relations. In this kingdom, man obeys rational laws quite normally. Moral laws are neither external laws nor supernatural orders. They are self-imposed and obedience to them does not depend upon external pressure. In such states everyone is means and end, in which everyone attains his own good and increases the good of others. In this way Kant imagines a 'Kingdom of Ends' a perfect society which is an ideal state in which all members obey the moral law and enjoys the freedom and happiness. This state of harmony represents perfect morality and Kant sets this as the ultimate goal to be achieved in a moral life.

Criticism:

Kant's third moral maxim is open to criticisms in the following points:

- a. Psychological dualism in reason and sensibility- Kant's moral principle is based on a psychological dualism in reason and sensibility. He treats the two as mutually contradictory, forgetting, meanwhile, their inseparable nature as parts of the soul. Sensibility contributes the realm of moral experience, requiring the structure provided by intellect. It not essential that it contradicts reason. Without of it, as a matter of fact, no activity can be carried out. Thus, sensibility is essential for a moral life. Dualism can be found fallacious.
- b. Mere form- Devoid of sensibility, Kant's moral principles are merely formal. Even the third moral maxim is simply a form. Stating that we, like citizens in a realm of ends, ought to treat everyone as an end in themselves, never merely as a means, fails to provide concrete guidance in practical life. What constitute the good for others? How should we strive for its realisation? This maxim offers no direction toward these ends.
- c. Partial moral theory – Kant's purer moralism is partial. It terms the moral value as a perfect state. However, obeying to duty regardless of the outcome can lead not only to asceticism but also to potential wrongdoing. If by our deviation from the truth an innocent life can be saved, how far is it moral to tell the truth and play with a life? An action cannot itself be moral. In it, both intention and consequence are important.

- Kant's Categorical Imperative disregards context, making it impractical

From the above account it can be pointed out that for the application of Categorical Imperative it is necessary to know what all are pre-suppositions we are entitled to make. For E.g., stealing would be inconsistent and hence wrong only if we accept private property. So, the moral law of Categorical Imperative is too general to fit it in with the facts. In fact, the most fundamental objection to Kant's theory is that he conceived of the good will as willing in a vacuum. Whereas actually the good will wills in the light of conditions and consequences. His good will is a will which wills nothing.

3.2.4 The Postulates of Morality

- For Kant, freedom, immortality, and the existence of God are essential assumptions for morality

Kant believed that to achieve what he calls the state of ‘highest good’ - a world where everyone is good and happy - we need to believe in three things: Freedom, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Kant considers these as the postulates of morality. Kant discusses the concept of freedom, acknowledging the difficulty in theoretically proving that rational beings possess freedom. However, he also argues that it is equally challenging to demonstrate that freedom is impossible. Despite this uncertainty, Kant asserts that the moral law obligates us to assume freedom and thereby grants us authorisation to do so.

- The connection of moral law with freedom

According to Kant, the moral law necessitates this assumption because freedom and the supreme principle of morality are closely intertwined. He suggests that practical freedom can be understood as the will’s independence from anything other than the moral law itself. In simpler terms, practical freedom means having the ability to act according to moral principles, free from external influences. Because of this intimate connection between freedom and morality, Kant concludes that the moral law requires us to presuppose freedom.

- ‘Summum bonum’ is crucial for grasping his ideas on immortality and the existence of God

Before we enter into the discussion of the second postulate of practical reason, which involves the idea of immortality, it is crucial to understand Kant’s concept of the ‘summum bonum,’ or highest good. This term is essential for grasping Kant’s thoughts on both the second postulate and the third, which relates to the existence of God. Kant explains that even in our practical reasoning, we seek a complete and unconditioned goal. This search leads us to the idea of the summum bonum, which represents the ultimate aim of our moral endeavors. However, the term ‘summum bonum’ can be a bit tricky because it can mean two things: either the highest good that is not limited by conditions, or the perfect good that is not just a part of a bigger whole.

- Virtue leads to happiness but duty transcends personal gain

For Kant, virtue is seen as the highest and unconditioned good. But he also believes that the perfect good, which includes both virtue and happiness, is what we truly seek. The connection between virtue and happiness is not just a logical one; instead, virtue leads to happiness in a cause-and-effect manner. In simpler terms, being virtuous makes us happy, but happiness alone is not enough to be considered truly good; it

also depends on being morally upright. Analysing each idea separately does not reveal their connection. However, it is practically necessary to be recognised that virtue should ideally lead to happiness. Still, the desire for happiness should not be the sole reason for being virtuous. Instead, we should act out of duty, regardless of personal gain.

- Acknowledgment of existence beyond enables realisation of highest good

Kant suggests that virtue naturally leads to happiness, but this idea is only conditionally false. It is false if we only consider existence in our physical world and if we limit virtue's role in producing happiness to this world alone. However, if we believe in existence beyond our physical realm, then the realisation of the highest good, with virtue leading to happiness, becomes possible. So, Kant argues that the highest good, consisting of virtue and happiness, is achievable if we acknowledge existence beyond our physical reality, with virtue ultimately leading to happiness, either directly or indirectly through divine intervention.

- Kant links belief in God to ensuring virtue leads to happiness

Now, let us discuss why Kant thinks we need to believe in God. Kant believes that being good should lead to being happy. But sometimes, it seems like being good does not always make us happy, and bad things happen to good people. Kant thinks that to make sure being good really does lead to happiness, we need to believe in a higher power, like God, who makes sure good actions are rewarded with happiness. It is like having a teacher who rewards good behavior, so you know being good will always pay off in the end.

- Kant's third postulate ties virtue to proper happiness as a reward, assuming God's existence

These beliefs help us stay motivated to keep trying to be good people, even when it is hard. Without them, Kant thinks we might lose hope and give up trying to be good altogether, which would not be good for anyone. So, while believing in these things might not be a strict rule, according to Kant, it is really helpful for us to stay on track with our moral goals and keep striving for that highest good.

Summarised Overview

In Kant's moral philosophy, he emphasises deontological ethics, which focus on the inherent rightness or wrongness of actions rather than their consequences. This means that actions are judged based on their adherence to moral principles, rather than their outcomes. Central to Kant's moral framework is the idea that rationality serves as the basis of morality. He argues that moral principles are grounded in reason and are universal and objective. This means that moral duties are determined by rational principles that apply to all rational beings.

The basis of Kant's moral theory is the Categorical Imperative, which is a moral command that applies universally and unconditionally. Kant presents several formulations of the categorical imperative, but they all essentially require individuals to act in ways that they could rationally will to be universal laws. Kant also discusses the postulates of morality, which include the concepts of freedom, immortality, and the existence of God. He argues that these postulates are necessary assumptions for the possibility of achieving the highest good, which is a state of moral perfection and happiness. While these postulates cannot be proven through theoretical reason, Kant suggests that they are required for the moral life and are justified by practical reason.

Self-Assessment

1. What is meant by Deontology?
2. Who advocated the moral maxims of the Categorical Imperative?
3. What is meant by Hypothetical Imperative?
4. Define good will.
5. Name the famous work of Kant in which he dealt with the categorical imperative.

Assignments

1. Explain briefly deontological ethics.
2. 'To be moral is to be rational, to be immoral is to be irrational.' – Elucidate this statement in the context of Kant's moral theory.
3. Distinguish between Categorical Imperative and Hypothetical Imperative.



4. Examine the features of Kant's Categorical Imperative.
5. Discuss the moral maxim of Kant's Categorical Imperative and bring out the criticisms levelled against it.
6. Briefly explain the Postulates of Ethics.

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UNIT 3

Contemporary Forms of Utilitarianism

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the many facets of Sidgwick's ethical theory including Utilitarianism, Egoistic ethical hedonism and intuitionism
- discuss the relevance of Peter Singer's Utilitarianism.
- examine the concept of Act-Utilitarianism.
- critically analyze Rule-Utilitarianism.
- get knowledge on the importance of preference Utilitarianism

Background

Modern or contemporary utilitarians are not of the opinion that pleasure leads to happiness. According to them, happiness consists in preference satisfaction or the more we satisfy our preferences, the more happy we will be. Here some preferences will be stronger than others and this depends on how happy they make us. But here it becomes an extension of hedonism and it is argued that whether someone who gets what they want is necessarily happy or whether giving people what they want is the only thing that is morally important. Hence preference satisfaction is regarded as merely an empirical way of understanding what happiness is.

Keywords

Rational utilitarianism, Ethical hedonism, Intuitionism, Act utilitarianism, Rule utilitarianism, Prudence, Rationalism

Discussion

- Sidgwick examines three ethical theories: Intuitionism, Egoistic ethical hedonism, and Utilitarianism

- Sidgwick rejects ethical hedonism due to inconsistencies in psychological and metaphysical arguments

3.3.1 Sidgwick's Rational Utilitarianism

Sidgwick in his '*The Method of Ethics*' speaks of three ethical theories namely Intuitionism, Egoistic ethical hedonism, and Utilitarianism. The type of intuitionism which he examines is general or dogmatic intuitionism. Sidgwick is a rational utilitarian. According to Sidgwick, every ethical theory contains an intuition. Egoistic hedonism, for example, is based on intuition that I ought to seek the greatest possible pleasure for myself. The principle of benevolence tells us that we ought to aim at the good of others. The principle of equity tells us that the good of one individual is not superior to the good of all. If we apply these two principles in life it means that we ought to give up egoistic ethical hedonism. So, we are left with two independent moral standards:

- a. Egoistic ethical hedonism, which tells us to seek our own pleasure.
- b. Utilitarianism, which tells us to seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. Sidgwick calls this the dualism of practical reason. He suggests that this practical difficulty might be solved by (1) Psychological reconciliation and (2) Metaphysical reconciliation.

The psychological argument shows that the feeling of sympathy and the practice of benevolence give us pleasure. It follows that actions done for the sake of others lead to the pleasure of the doer of the action. Introspection shows that this is not always the case. The metaphysical theory tells us that God has arranged the events in such a way that the individual who works for the pleasure of others will always be rewarded either in this life or in the next. We find that the most devoted servants of their fellowmen suffer the worst even in this life. Sidgwick did not accept either the psychological or metaphysical arguments. The real solution to this difficulty appears to be a complete rejection of ethical hedonism.

According to Sidgwick, pleasure is the ultimate aim of life. To quote him, 'Pleasure or happiness is the ultimate good.' Knowledge, beauty, and other objects which are considered by some to have intrinsic value are the only means to happiness. All objects are good only in so far as they yield pleasure. According to Sidgwick, reason or intuition directs that plea-

- For Sidgwick, pleasure is the ultimate goal of life

- The goal of every action should be the happiness of all, not just the individual

- Sidgwick's theory of duty is intellectualistic, and his theory of ultimate good is hedonistic

- The principle of prudence advises considering all aspects and times of lives when seeking pleasure

sure is the solitary objective. It is the pleasure which is the essence of the desirable consciousness, and this desirable consciousness is the ultimate good. As for social health or good qualities, they are merely means to pleasure. Their importance corresponds directly to the amount of pleasure which they create. Separated from pleasure, they themselves have no value.

Sidgwick is a Utilitarian. According to him, while on the one hand, we shall keep our eye on actions giving pleasure and not pleasure itself, it is also necessary, on the other hand, that the aim be the pleasure of all and not of the individual. There is a complete adjustment between unselfish philanthropy and intellectual self-love. Only individual pleasure, can, in itself, be momentary and despicable, but universal pleasure, certainly is desirable. In the opinion of Sidgwick, it is the mandate of reason or intuition that the pleasure of the individual and the collectivity is to be treated as one, and in this way, social pleasure is to be sought.

According to Sidgwick, it is man's prudence which makes pleasure the ultimate aim. Although the ultimate good is affective, it is sensed by reason, not experience. Thus, Sidgwick is a hedonist only in regard to his belief in pleasure as the ultimate aim; otherwise, with regard to questions of motivating causes, he is a rationalist and intuitionist. His theory of duty is intellectualistic, while his theory of ultimate good is hedonistic. For Sidgwick, moral consciousness gives us not only the knowledge of the ultimate good but also tells us the principle of its distribution. Prudence, benevolence, and justice are the three rational principles of the distribution of pleasure between society and the individual. These principles offer clear practical directives in our life and these cannot be got from purely philosophical principles.

According to this principle of prudence or rational self-love, when we are searching for pleasure, we should think of all the aspects and times of our lives. It is not right to give up present pleasure for the pleasures in the future. In the same way, definite pleasure in the present is not to be given up for uncertain pleasure in the future. Man's aim is permanent and integral pleasure, not momentary pleasure. Rational self-love directs to an impartial concern for all parts of our conscious life. In life, it is only reason which affects the right distribution of pleasure. The aim of man is a life of total pleasure.

According to the axiom of rational benevolence, 'each one

- Sidgwick's axiom of rational benevolence asserts that individuals are morally obliged to prioritise the well-being of others as much as their own

is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as his own.' In other words, 'I ought not to prefer my own lesser good to the greater good of another.' From the viewpoint of the universe, the pleasure of all is similar. Experience cannot fill up the gap between egoism and altruism. It is the reason which links individual and general pleasure to each other. Reason tells that everyone should aim at the pleasure of all, and he should sacrifice his own pleasure for that of all. Against Mill, Sidgwick gives logical evidence for Utilitarianism. If everyone has the right to enjoy his own pleasure and the good of the individual is his pleasure, then the pleasure of everyone should have equal importance. The pleasure of everyone is a part of universal pleasure and thus if for some greater increase in universal pleasure, it becomes necessary to dispense with lesser individual pleasure, it then becomes a duty. It is necessary that there be an equal increase in social as well as individual pleasure.

- The principle of justice advocates that individuals should treat others as they would like to be treated

Justice is a complement to the principles of rational self-love and rational benevolence. According to this principle, a person should behave towards other people as he would have them behave towards him. It is the principle of equity. It directs that there be an equal distribution of pleasure among different individuals of society and the different moments of an individual's own life. This equality is not a blind one. This is rational impartiality. According to this principle, the ultimate good of individual life is the obtaining of pleasure of the total life. In the whole life, different moments do not have equal importance but they all do have their own importance. According to the principle of justice, it is essential to distribute pleasure among the different moments of life according to their importance.

3.3.1.1 Criticism

The more important of the many arguments advocated against the Rational Utilitarianism of Sidgwick are as follows:

1. Confusion between Happiness and Pleasure: Sidgwick makes a mistake by not distinguishing between pleasure and happiness. Happiness is a state of adjustment which is attained by a balance between enjoyment of pleasures and duties while pleasure is a sentient experience. Pleasure is changeable and instantaneous. In the words of Green, the happiness of self-realisation is a state of self-satisfaction.

2. **Partial Ultimate Aim:** To treat pleasure as the ultimate aim is to manifest a completely partial viewpoint. Sidgwick treats knowledge, beauty, etc., merely as a means to pleasure. This assumption is neither logical nor is upheld by experience. Self has both affective and rational aspects. No theory which emphasises one and violates or overlooks the other aspect can satisfy the integral self. In the self, feeling is not everything, reason and violation also being its important constituents. To call pleasure the desirable consciousness is to profess ignorance. A rational person will not treat pleasure as desirable because pleasure to one will not satisfy reason. Pleasure is merely a feeling of value. Real value is in the object, the ultimate good satisfies all aspects of personality. Thus, pleasure cannot be the ultimate good. Senses themselves are blind. Without being directed by reason, they are incapable of achieving any adjustment. Thus, the commands of reason will show the way because lust for pleasure cannot be allowed to lead the way. Reason and feeling complement each other. Even though conceding the importance of reason, Sidgwick could not explain the fundamental defect of hedonism.
3. **Contradiction between Hedonism and Rationalism:** Sidgwick failed signally in making a compromisal stand between hedonistic affective good and the ultimate good of Intuitionism or Intellectualism. He could not fill up the gulf of the 'Dualism of Prudence.' Sidgwick has given license for resolving the conflict between egoism and altruism by means of comparison but it is not possible to discern the greater of the two by measuring egoism and altruism.
4. **Lack of compromise between Egoism and Altruism:** Sidgwick did not succeed in harmonising altruism and egoism. Sidgwick is a hedonist, and egoism and altruism simply cannot meet on a hedonistic basis. Altruism can be established only on Perfectionism. Benevolence cannot be accompanied by self-love. It makes self-sacrifice indispensable; the more egoistic a person, the less will he be benevolent. Actually, as a person tends more and more towards benevolence, he sacrifices more and more of his individual interests. A person can attain naturality in benevolence only when he can realise his self in all beings. Society and the individual are both two forms of the same universal self. That the universal self is just as much in us as in others, is a fact which must be realised before the conflict between egoism and altruism can be resolved.

5. Mistake on the subject of the nature of moral consciousness: Sidgwick misunderstood the form of moral consciousness. According to him, its nature is affective, but in fact, feeling is only a part of human consciousness. Thought, feeling and will are three inseparable parts of human consciousness. Any state of consciousness can be seen from the viewpoint of these three. Every state is the assimilation of these three. None of these can be extracted from it. A state of pleasure alone is meaningless, and it is not the subject of ethical study. Real self-satisfaction can result only on the combination of these three. Only such a state can provide happiness. Pleasure itself is not moral, consciousness being only the affective aspect of it.
6. Knowledge and ethical values are not merely means to pleasure: Thus, it is obvious that it is fallacious to look upon knowledge and ethical values as mere means to pleasure. Knowledge and will are no less important than the sensation of pleasure. They are ends in themselves. They have their own intrinsic importance, and they satisfy the intellectual aspect. Thus, even if pleasure is not obtained, they can still be the objectives. Morality is not merely the means of obtaining pleasure. Moral quality and character are ends in themselves. Actually, Sidgwick failed to comprehend the moral importance of character. Taking conduct and character to be different, he treated conduct as superior to character. According to him, conduct is the object of moral judgment. Results are of prime importance in actions. All these assumptions on the part of Sidgwick are grounded in prudence and do not explain morality. According to Ethics, it is just an opposite thing to say that character is the means of conduct. Actually, conduct is the manifestation of character, and moral aim is the perfection of character.
7. Quantitative Principles do not guide in qualitative distinctions: For the distribution of pleasure, Sidgwick propounded three principles: justice, prudence, and benevolence. All these are quantitative principles. But quantitative principles can distribute only objects. In the context of good, quantitative distinctions do not give any directions.
8. Internal defects and contradictions: In the theory of Sidgwick, there are numerous internal mistakes and contradictions. At one time he emphasises the desirability of objects and at others their rationality. In fact, he does not succeed

in compromising Hedonism and Rationalism and also does not combine Intuitionism and Utilitarianism. 'Rational Utilitarianism' or 'Intuitional Utilitarianism' evinces an internal paradox. This paradox can be explained only in the light of Perfectionism. The theory of Sidgwick, cannot by any means be declared more successful than that of Mill and other Utilitarians.

3.3.2 Paradox of Hedonism

Sidgwick pointed out that the best way to get pleasure is to forget it. The player who is continually thinking of the enjoyment that he is getting out of the game will miss the enjoyment to a great extent, while the player who gives all his mind to playing and winning the game gets the fullest enjoyment out of it. The paradox of hedonism holds that in order to get pleasure, it is necessary to seek something else. Sidgwick concedes the paradox of Hedonism. Looking for pleasure will not bring pleasure. To obtain pleasure, one should search for pleasure giving object. Reason informs that pleasure is augmented by an unselfish search for good qualities. Knowledge, beauty, art etc. give pleasure to man and they should, consequently, be sought for but it must consistently be remembered that their importance is only proportional to the degree of pleasure accruing from them. Against the Hedonism of Mill and Bentham, Sidgwick indicates the paradox of Hedonism. 'The impulse towards pleasure if too predominant defeats its own purpose.' Sidgwick is an ethical hedonist. According to him, pleasure is not but ought to be the aim to the individual. He does not reason as Mill does. He asserts that reason, by its intuition, tells us that pleasure is the ultimate good, which is an end in itself.

- Sidgwick suggests that the best way to derive pleasure is to focus on unselfish pursuits of good qualities

- William Lillie challenges the paradox of hedonism by asserting that individuals can find pleasure in the pursuit of specific goals.

William Lillie does not completely agree with Sidgwick. He says that it is possible to make pleasure the aim in certain matters. In such cases, we do get pleasure in spite of the paradox of hedonism. It would be foolish to suppose that because when men aim at things than pleasure. They never aim at pleasure. There are certain enjoyments in satisfaction of bodily appetites and enjoyment of seeing beautiful objects which are pleasurable even when we think of these pleasure motions.

3.3.3 Peter Singer's Utilitarianism

Peter Albert David Singer is an Australian Philosopher and his interest areas are ethics and political philosophy. He

- Singer rejects the traditional duty-charity distinction and asserts that any action becomes a duty if it prevents more pain or fosters more happiness.

has contributed a lot in applied ethics and is considered as one of the intellectual founders of modern animal rights. His works in applied ethics and politics were highly influenced by Utilitarianism, which holds that an action is morally right if and only if it produces as much good or utility for all people affected by the action. As stated in Britannica, “An interesting philosophical implication of Singers larger argument was that the traditional distinction between duty and charity- between actions that one is obliged to do and actions that it would be good to do even though one is not obliged to do them was seriously weakened, if not completely undermined. On the utilitarian principles Singer plausibly applied to this case, any action becomes a duty if it will prevent more pain than it causes or cause more happiness than it prevents.” Here, we see Utilitarianism put into practice. When we look into issues like euthanasia, animal welfare, global poverty, etc., in which Singer was interested, we encounter themes that might lead us to Utilitarianism.

- Peter Singer’s writings emphasise the moral rightness of actions that maximise happiness

Peter Singer published his work, *Animal Liberation* in 1995, and this contributed a lot to the animal rights movement. The importance of this publication lies in the fact that it generated a new interest among the ethical thinkers to the moral status of animals also. Later in the 1980’s, he published many articles and books through which he was able to shed light on animal rights and other topics in applied ethics. This points to the fact that Singer is one of the most influential contemporary Utilitarian philosophers who is best known for his views on animal ethics. When we go through his works on animals, poverty, applied ethics, etc., we can see that he believes that the right thing to do or an act is morally right if it maximises happiness. One of his famous arguments in his work, *Famine, Affluence and Morality*, is, ‘if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.’

- Equal consideration of interests in human and non-human realms of Singer laid the philosophical foundation for the animal rights movement

Again, we can infer from his writing that identical interests must be given equal moral weight in whatever type of being they occur. This species impartiality is really based on his Utilitarianism, which he extended to the nonhuman world also. This shows that he wanted to treat animals also on equal moral status because, just like human beings, animals also have experiences of suffering and happiness. So, his Utilitarianism was inclusive of non-human beings also and extended to every sentient being. He had an equal consideration of interest,

- Singer believed that the morality of an action is determined by its consequences

which he applied to both the human and non-human world. Thus, his writings provided a philosophical basis for the animal rights movements and it had a considerable effect on attitudes and practices towards animals all over the world.

Singer, to a great extent, was an Act Utilitarian as he believed that it is the consequences of the contemplated act that matters most. His positions on human suffering, poverty, animals, etc., were all based on his consequentialism, and he held that a morally right act is that which produces the best consequences.

- Preference Utilitarianism, advocated by Peter Singer, focuses on fulfilling individual preferences

The kind of Utilitarianism which stands for promoting action that will fulfil or satisfy the interests or preferences of the persons involved in it. It is known as preference Utilitarianism. Peter Singer is an advocate of this kind of Utilitarianism because he stood for maximising the satisfaction of individual preferences and here, we find his difference from classical Utilitarianism. He clearly stated this when he wrote, “The way of thinking I have outlined is a form of utilitarianism. It differs from classical utilitarianism in that ‘best consequences’ is understood as meaning what, on balance, furthers the interests of those affected rather than merely what increases pleasure and reduces pain. It has, however, been suggested that classical utilitarians like Bentham and John Stuart Mill used ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain’ in a broad sense that allowed them to include achieving what one desired as ‘pleasure’ and the reverse as a ‘pain’.” Here we can see that as a preference Utilitarianism, Singer’s approach concentrates as minimising suffering, rather than maximising pleasure. Again, Singer was always concerned about minorities, as he preferred equality. So he was of the opinion that all minorities should be taken into account with other individuals when we consider what is best.

- Peter Singer’s ethical thought aligns with Utilitarianism

From the above account, it becomes evident that Peter Singer’s ethical thought is a form of Utilitarianism because consequentialism, welfarism, impartiality and aggregationism, which are the four elements of Utilitarianism, can be easily traced in his writings.

3.3.4 Act Utilitarianism

As we have discussed before, Utilitarianism is an ethical theory which links morality to the maximisation of happiness. It can focus on acts, decision procedures, and rules of institutions. The simplest form of it is Act-Utilitarianism.

- Act-utilitarianism asserts that an action is right or wrong based on the utility it produces

According to it, each action's rightness or wrongness depends on the utility it produces in comparison with possible alternatives. It holds that the right act is the act that produces the most well-being and maximises welfare on each occasion. As it applied to act, it is called a direct moral theory by ethical thinkers. As stated in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "The commonest and most straightforward version of utilitarianism is act-utilitarianism, according to which the criterion of an action's rightness is that it maximises utility. Act-utilitarians might offer two accounts of rightness. The objectively right action would be that which actually does maximise utility, while the subjectively right action would be that which maximises expected utility. Agents would usually be blamed for not doing what was subjectively right." Here, we find that act utilitarianism is of two different kinds – subjective act utilitarianism and objective utilitarianism. The form tells agents to attempt to maximise utility directly, while the latter permits agents to use non-utilitarian decision-making procedures.

- Most Act-utilitarians endorse a two-level theory, applying common-sense morality and turning to utilitarianism only when moral principles conflict

Act-utilitarianism holds that actions that bring happiness to the world on the whole and reduce suffering are good actions. It follows that actions that bring suffering and reduce happiness are bad. So "most act-utilitarians have argued that we should not attempt to put act-utilitarianism into practice wholesale, but stick by a lot of common-sense morality. It will save a lot of valuable time, is based on long experience, and will keep us on the straight and narrow. Act-utilitarians who recommend sole and constant application of their theory as well as those who recommend that we never consult the theory and use common sense morality can both be called single-level theorists since moral thinking will be carried on only at one level. Most utilitarians have adopted a two-level theory, according to which we consult utilitarianism only sometimes-in particular when the principles of ordinary morality conflict with one another."

- Act-utilitarianism posits that an action is morally right if it maximises overall utility

The advocates of Act-Utilitarianism believe that an action is morally good or right when that action will create, the greatest net utility or produce the best overall result. So, it is held that "Act utilitarianism is an extremely demanding theory since it requires you to be entirely impartial between your own interests, the interests of those you love, and the interests of all. The usual example offered is famine relief. By giving up all your time, money and energy to famine relief, you will save many lives and prevent much suffering. Utilitarians often

claim at this point that there are limits to human capabilities, and utilitarianism requires us only to do what we can.”

3.3.4.1 Critical Analysis

- Act-utilitarianism faces numerous criticisms

Critics have pointed out that act utilitarianism is unjust, immoral and unreasonable demanding. According to Tim Mulgan, “One primary reason for abandoning act-utilitarianism is to avoid the injustice and demandingness objections. However, act-utilitarianism has other problems. In particular, it faces an objection on utilitarian grounds that it is self-defeating because constant calculators do not maximise welfare. If our target is maximum welfare, we will sometimes do better if we do not aim directly at that target. Why is it unwise to aim directly at happiness? Because some valuable results are calculatively elusive- they are not available to those who deliberately aim at them. Here are some common examples.

1. **Spontaneity:** If you calculate too precisely or focus too directly on a desired result, you will not achieve it. For instance, suppose you are engaged in an artistic endeavour which is not valuable if performed spontaneously. You want to behave spontaneously. This result cannot be attained if you deliberately concentrate on being spontaneous.
2. **Danger:** If you are performing some dangerous tasks, then you risk losing your nerve if you think too much about the danger.
3. **Time is of the essence:** Some decisions must be made very quickly. If you are about to be hit by a truck, you should not wait to perform precise utilitarian calculations.
4. **Friendship:** A good friend directly pursues the interests of her friends rather than seeking to maximise the good. Someone who only spends time with you because that maximises overall happiness- and would abandon you immediately if she could produce more happiness elsewhere- is not a real friend. Conscious maximisers cannot either experience friendship themselves or provide the benefits of real friendship to others.
5. **Problem of Coordination :** Everyone must decide what side of the road to drive on. If each individual calculates the best strategy, then some will drive on the left and some

on the right. The result is sub-optimal.

- Act utilitarianism offers objective answers to moral questions despite its criticisms

Many utilitarians distinguish between a criterion of evaluation and a decision procedure. Utilitarians are committed to welfare maximisation as their criterion. Welfare maximisation is ultimately what makes outcomes good and action right.”

In spite of the above criticisms, one advantage of the act utilitarianism is that it shows how moral questions have objectively true answers.

3.3.5 Rule Utilitarianism

- Rule utilitarianism asserts that the morality of actions depends on rules

While act utilitarianism is a direct moral theory, rule utilitarianism is an indirect version. It holds that “rightness or wrongness of actions depends not directly on whether they maximise happiness, but rather on certain rules, viz. those which will maximise happiness were most or all people to accept them.” Rule utilitarianism holds that an act can be judged as moral right only if it is in accordance to a moral rule. It also argues that justification of a moral rule can be done only if it brings about the best outcome. This is clearly stated in the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy as, “According to rule utilitarianism, on the other hand, individual actions are evaluated, in theory not just in practice, by whether they conform to a justified moral rule, and the utilitarian standard is applied only to general rules. Some rule utilitarians hold that actions are right provided they are permitted by rules, the general acceptance of which would maximise utility in the agent’s society and wrong only if they would be prohibited by such rules. There are a number of forms of rule utilitarianism, and utilitarians disagree about whether act or rule utilitarianism is correct.”

Defenders of rule utilitarianism argue that all the criticisms against utilitarianism are mostly due to the fact that we have concentrated on act utilitarianism. They have put forward rule utilitarianism as a solution to these problems. “Rule utilitarianism accepts that human beings will follow patterns of behaviour as though following rules, and applies the method to those rules rather than to the individual acts. On rule-utilitarianism we compare the utility of people in a society following different possible rules rather than taking different possible actions. Moral thinking becomes more about the design of a society structured by various (rule-governed) practices and institutions in which we are choosing those practices, insti-

- Rule utilitarianism asserts that, if widely followed, it maximises overall utility

tutions and rules that will produce greater utility when people engage with them, than about the governing of individual conduct. The governing of individual conduct still goes on, of course: that is the point of a moral theory. But it is indirect: through the rules rather than by a straightforward calculation of the utility.” So, it is evident that for rule utilitarianism, an action is right if and only if it falls under a rule, the general following of which would result in greater utility than an alternative available rule. Favoring your friends, keeping your promises, etc., become right or morally good acts.

- intuitively committed to moral principles

The rule-utilitarianism can solve many of problems associated with other simple version of utilitarianism and solve the problems of unmanageable calculations. Another merit of rule-utilitarianism is that it reduces the appearance that utilitarianism led us to acts that are immoral. Hence, we can say that “Rule-utilitarianism therefore appears to take the sting out of some of the deontologist’s strongest criticisms of ‘unprincipled’ utilitarianism. Rule-utilitarianism gives us a morality that does contain principles, and many of the principles it contains are ones to which we are intuitively committed. But while rule-utilitarianism explains and allows us rationally to endorse our commitment to these principles, it does so without invoking anything mysterious like the deontologist’s ‘thou shalt.’

3.3.5.1 Criticism

- Critics contend that rule-utilitarianism’s dependence on contingent circumstances undermines the validity of moral rules

Some criticisms are levelled against Rule-utilitarianism also. They are as follows: (1) Critics argue that rule-utilitarianism makes the validity of the moral rules too contingent and too accidental. Again, according to Rule-utilitarianism, acts are right in so far as they conform to the rules. But the rules themselves may be determined by circumstances and outcomes in the utilitarian manner. J.J.C. Smart is of the opinion that rule might be useful to the act-utilitarian agent. But they should only be thought of as guides rather than as part of what makes acts right and wrong. He points out again that rule-utilitarianism is too insulated from the outcomes of particular cases. Rule-utilitarianism has not received as much attention as act-utilitarianism because it detaches itself from the attractiveness of maximisation. It is criticised by deontologists for failing to explain the true basis of moral rules. Hence critics point out that rule-utilitarianism cannot be a useful distinctive utilitarian theory. Either it is useless or it is indistinguishable from act-utilitarianism.

Summarised Overview

Sidgwick's Rational Utilitarianism holds that pleasure is the only intrinsic value, which is good in itself. It is the only rational object of desire. Unlike Mill, Sidgwick bases his hedonism on the authority of conscience or practical reason. But contemporary Utilitarians are less likely to hold that happiness consists in pleasure. The most popular conception of happiness today is preference satisfaction or preference utilitarianism. It is the view that the more you get what you want or satisfy your preferences, the happier you will be. Peter Singer's utilitarianism is a version of this kind of utilitarianism. Other forms of contemporary utilitarianism are act-utilitarianism and rule-utilitarianism. According to the former, an action is right if it creates the greatest net utility. The latter form holds that an action is right, if it is consistent with those rules which would maximise utility if all accepted them.

Self-Assessment

1. Who propounded Rational Utilitarianism?
2. Write a short note on Act-Utilitarianism.
3. What is meant by Utilitarianism?
4. Name the author of the book *Animal Liberation*.
5. Write a short note on Rule-Utilitarianism.

Assignments

1. Examine the features of Sidgwick's Utilitarianism.
2. Explain briefly the Paradox of hedonism according to Sidgwick.
3. Bring out the differences between Act-Utilitarianism and Rule-Utilitarianism.
4. Discuss the importance of Peter Singer's Utilitarianism.
5. Critically analyse Rule-Utilitarianism.
6. Elucidate the relevance of Act-Utilitarianism.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



BLOCK 4
ETHICS

UNIT 1

Metaethics: An Introduction

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the major concerns of the twentieth century moral discourse
- differentiate between the first-order and second-order approaches in ethics
- develop a general understanding of the types of metaethical questions and theories
- analyse the rational grounds of various normative theories
- assess practical moral problems with enhanced moral reasoning

Background

Ethics comprises mainly three divisions – normative ethics, applied ethics and metaethics. Normative ethics is the study of the standards based on which things and events are judged good/bad –for example, hedonism states that pleasure is the ultimate good, and deontology gives importance to duties whatever be the consequences. The application of such norms to real life situations forms the arena of applied ethics – for example, considering whether to tell a lie or not in order to escape from death. Metaethics analyses the assumptions or presuppositions behind moral thought and discourse. It ponders upon questions like what exactly is meant by ‘good’ and whether there is any objectively valid ‘good’ irrespective of the desires and feelings of individuals. The twentieth century moral philosophy shows much more interest on metaethical questions than ever before in the history of Western philosophy. This unit sheds light on the peculiarities of metaethics as a second-order study as compared to normative ethics of the first-order. The major questions that come under the purview of a metaethical discourse and the various theories that attempt to answer those questions are also discussed in this unit.

Keywords

Metaethics, Second-order inquiry, Ethical cognitivism, Ethical non-cognitivism

Discussion

- Moore effects a shift from normative ethics to metaethics

The twentieth century moral philosophy begins with G E Moore's statement in the preface of his famous work '*Principia Ethica*'. He says that all the difficulties and disagreements in the ethical theories of the previous centuries are because of the attempts to answer questions without first discovering the real nature of the question for which the answer is sought. In the first chapter of the book where he discusses the 'subject matter of ethics', Moore says: 'Ethics is undoubtedly concerned with the question what good conduct is; but being concerned with this, it obviously does not start at the beginning, unless it is prepared to tell us what is good as well as what is conduct.' Pointing out the need to analyse the meaning and definability of ethical terms themselves before making ethical theories using such terms, the entire book makes a huge impact on the moral philosophy of twentieth century. It changes the entire thrust of ethical inquiry in the direction of 'metaethics' which examines the epistemological, metaphysical and semantic assumptions underlying various normative theories. The methodology shifts from discourse on moral issues to discourse on what happens during a moral discourse.

- Focus of twentieth century moral philosophy on abstract issues

Moore convicts the then-prevailing theories like utilitarianism of mistakenly considering moral values like 'good' as natural entities. According to him, 'good' is simple and non-natural, and thus can be known through intuition only. Many later philosophers, especially on behalf of the Logical Positivism movement reject such an intuitive knowledge and advocate that moral judgements are mere expressions of emotions and feelings which can never claim truth-value. The theory of emotivism proposed by A J Ayer is later modified by that of C L Stevenson wherein the emphasis is on influencing attitudes. R M Hare then develops prescriptivism which holds that moral judgments prescribe rather than merely describe or express feelings and differentiates the moral prescriptions from the non-moral ones in terms of the universalisability of the for-

mer. In parallel to this stream, a group of philosophers continued to improvise and defend the old normative approaches. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the moral discourse focuses on the character development of individuals making virtue theories popular. By the end of the century, western moral thought becomes more oriented on practical issues.

- References to abstract moral discourse in Plato's dialogues

Even though the term 'metaethics' comes into usage in the twentieth century, the metaethical approach dates back to the ancient Greek philosophy. For example, in the works of Plato, we see Socrates asking for the exact definitions of 'justice', 'piety,' etc. rather than stating whichever acts are 'just' or 'pious'. We have also the cases of the sophists like Callicles and Thrasymachus who claimed that morality was based on human desires, feelings and choices and the norms were mere convention.

4.1.1 Metaethics, Normative ethics and Applied ethics

- Different levels of moral theorising

We enter the realm of morality when we express moral judgments like we ought to help others, we ought not to harm others, and so on. From simply holding a moral position or having moral beliefs or making moral judgments, we move to developing a normative ethics when we reflect on our moral beliefs and seek their justification and explanation. This leads to the formulation of general theories such as hedonism, utilitarianism and deontology which give order and coherence to our moral judgments. These theories are then used to justify our judgements in particular moral issues. We enter another sphere when we reflect on what we are doing when we make a moral judgment; if we are reporting on the nature of certain moral facts, or simply expressing our feelings, or reporting on what we believe to be willed by God, etc. These are different levels of philosophising in the discipline of ethics.

Suppose a teacher initiates a group discussion in the classroom on whether it is right or wrong on the part of a poor father to steal some money for the emergency medical surgery of his daughter. The daughter is passing through a life-threatening condition and the man has already tried his level best but could manage only little money. The discussion may ignite contrasting opinions among the students. It can be said that the father decides to steal the money only to meet the medical

- Applied ethics applies ethical norms and principles to judge
- what is right/wrong in particular moral issues

expenses. If he does not do that, the surgery would not happen and the daughter may die. We should try all possible ways to save a life. Even though the father resorts to unfair means, it is for a desirable consequence. Therefore, his act is right as it is not the means that matters but the end. A contrasting opinion may convict the father as guilty. Stealing is wrong in all situations irrespective of the result. We should not adopt such wrong paths whatever the consequences or ends be. This is a case of applied ethics where the students may apply different rules or principles to conclude what is right/wrong in a particular situation.

- Normative ethics examines the merits and demerits of different ethical norms and principles

The subsequent stage of the aforementioned discussion may be on the criteria to judge an action as right/wrong; what are the principles and standards for judging an action as right/wrong? Another issue that can be part of the discussion would be that of determining what exactly is a good consequence, i.e., how do we conclude some event or object as good/bad? It can be seen here that the discussion proceeds onto an abstract level where the students actively examine the merits and demerits of the different standards and norms that distinguish right actions from wrong ones and good events from bad events. This level belongs to normative ethics where the various norms or rules are examined.

- Metaethics analyses the assumptions underlying various normative theories

The teacher may again draw the attention of the students to some presumptions contained in their arguments. Are the ethical norms to judge actions as right/wrong objectively valid? Are there objectively valid ethical norms at all based on which we can determine certain actions to be right/wrong? Do they change relatively with respect to the preferences of individuals and communities? The students may not have thought about such things before and would be curious to explore the same. The teacher can then introduce them to more questions of the same kind. What do you exactly mean by 'right', 'wrong', 'good', and 'bad'? Are they entities that exist in the nature? The discussion enters a more abstract level while attempting to answer those questions. This is the realm of metaethics.

4.1.2 Metaethics: A Second-Order Inquiry

An inquiry after knowledge in any field can proceed through different levels. They are named as first-order inquiry, second-order inquiry and so on. A first-order inquiry in a specific discipline is the endeavour to investigate and understand

- First-order inquiry deals with particular issues in a subject
- Second-order inquiry examines the explanations given at the first-order level

the issues, or to find reasons or explanations for the events that fall within its domain. On the other hand, a second-order inquiry examines the explanations given at the first-order level, to ascertain whether they stand up to reason, and to what extent. The assumptions and postulates underlying the first-order arguments are made explicit and examined therein. It can be said that the definitions and other clarifications of a general nature properly belong to the second order. For example, if there is a discussion on whether a certain conduct or judgment is just and fair, the different positions on it belong to the first order; while the effort to understand what justice is, and what it means to say that an action is just and fair, belongs to the second order. In the field of moral discourse, normative ethics deals with the first-order moral questions and metaethics takes up the second-order approach to morality.

- Normative ethics deals with first-order moral questions

First-order moral questions with which the normative ethics deals are about the norms that determine the moral status of actions, persons and events. The questions here include: what peculiarities of actions make them either morally right or morally wrong? what characteristics of persons make them morally good or bad? what features of things, events, and states of affairs make them good or bad? Many principles of right conduct and principles of goodness or value have been formulated by philosophers to answer such questions. Those principles or norms state the general conditions under which actions are judged right/wrong, persons are judged morally good/bad and states of affairs are classified as having or lacking moral value. Mill's principle of utility is an example, according to which actions that tend to promote happiness are right and that tend to produce the reverse, i.e. pain, are wrong. Immanuel Kant has proposed another principle based on which we should act only if we could will that the principle of our actions become a universal law. According to hedonism, all the states of pleasure are intrinsically good and all the states of pain are intrinsically bad. These principles are the results of a normative approach. The investigation of such theoretical first-order questions is important for formulating clear and well-supported answers to moral questions about specific actions, persons, and states of affairs such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, treatment of animals, and other controversial issues that give scope for conflicting positions but prevent any easy solution.

But when there are competing normative theories, a reflective person may ask which, if any, of them is correct. There arises

- Metaethics deals with second-order moral questions

a need to question the justification for the acceptance or rejection of any theory and to test the grounds on which such theories are built. The inquiry thus moves from first-order questions to questions about first-order answers. This is what we call as a second-order approach. Timmons says: ‘Questions about adjudicating among competing normative theories are second-order questions, that is, questions about first-order moral discourse and practice that are studied by those engaged in metaethical reflection’.

- Metaethics asks questions about moral questions

The prefix ‘meta’ in metaethics suggests ‘to think about’ ethics. Through metaethics, ethics becomes ‘self-referential’; it studies itself. Thus, philosophers consider metaethics as a second-order discipline. A metaethicist tries to make sense of what is going on while engaging in a moral discourse. Metaethical questions are not themselves moral questions, but are questions about moral questions, that is, ‘meta’ questions. Smith says: ‘in metaethics, we are concerned not with questions which are the province of normative ethics like ‘Should I give to famine relief?’ or ‘Should I return the wallet I found in the street?’ but with questions about questions like these’. We can say that in seeking to understand what is valuable and morally obligatory in human life, the metaethicists have sought to ask what value and moral obligation themselves are.

- Bird’s-eye view on the practice of ethics

Normative and applied ethics focus on what is moral whereas metaethics focuses on what morality itself is. Two people may disagree about the ethics of a physician-assisted suicide, even though they both agree at the more abstract level of a general normative theory like Utilitarianism. Similarly, people who disagree at the level of a general normative theory may agree on the objective validity of moral values, or vice versa. Thus, metaethics is referred to as ‘second-order’ moral theorising – a highly abstract way of thinking philosophically about morality. Metaethics is a bird’s-eye view on the practice of ethics.

4.1.3 Metaethical Questions

As mentioned in the previous section, metaethics analyses the practice of ethics. It analyses what do we do when we evaluate or judge humans’ actions to be right/wrong. Hudson says: ‘Metaethics is not about what people ought to do. It is about what they are doing when they talk about what they ought to do.’

- Metaethical questions are about the epistemological, metaphysical and semantic commitments of moral thought

We can try to understand the metaethics by philosophising the various parts of the ethical practice. As metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language are called the ‘core areas’ of philosophy, metaethics can be characterised as what happens when we ask questions from the core areas of philosophy about the subject matter of morality. In this sense, metaethics is the attempt to understand the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological assumptions and commitments of moral thought, talk, and practice. As such, it counts within its domain a broad range of questions and puzzles. These questions lead naturally to puzzles about the meaning of moral claims as well as about moral truths and the justification of our moral commitments.

The following list, gives a sufficient account of the major metaethical questions:

- Varieties of metaethical questions

- What exactly are people doing when they use moral words such as ‘good’ and ‘right’?
- What is the semantic function of moral discourse? Is the function of moral discourse to state facts, or does it have some other non-fact-stating role?
- What precisely is a moral value in the first place, and are such values similar to other familiar sorts of entities, such as objects and properties? Do moral facts (or properties) exist? If so, what are they like? How are they related to other facts (about psychology, happiness, human conventions)? Are they identical with or reducible to natural facts (or properties) or are they irreducible and having a nature of their own?
- Is there such a thing as moral knowledge? Where do moral values come from, and what is their source and foundation? How can we know whether our moral judgements are true or false? How can we ever justify our claims to moral knowledge?
- Is morality more a matter of taste than truth? Are moral standards culturally relative? Are things morally right or wrong for all people at all times, or does morality vary from person to person, context to context, or culture to culture?

4.1.4 Metaethical Theories

- Different responses to metaethical questions resulted in various metaethical theories

It is clear by now that the range of issues, puzzles and questions that fall within metaethics are consistently abstract. They attempt to step back from particular substantive debates within morality to reflect upon the views, assumptions, and commitments that are shared by those who engage in the debate. Such reflection reveals the problematic nature of various aspects of morality. Metaethicists stress that a careful and effortful study of morality will reveal to us that moral values, duties and responsibilities are just a myth. Also, various moral principles or axioms that are presented by philosophers as authoritative universal criteria or standards are in fact merely expressions of emotion or projections of personal and particular attitudes of those holding those principles.

4.1.4.1 Ethical Cognitivism and Ethical non-Cognitivism

- Moral judgements are statements having truth value
- Moral judgements are merely expressions of feelings/emotions

In a particular moral judgement, for example, the judgement 'murder is wrong,' the ethical cognitivists and non-cognitivists have different views about the truth value of the statement. According to cognitivism, a moral judgement like the above expresses a belief and beliefs have a truth value. They can be assessed in terms of truth and falsity. That means, cognitivists think that moral judgements are capable of being true or false. On the other hand, non-cognitivism states that moral judgements express non-cognitive states like emotions or desires. Desires and emotions do not have a truth-value. Thus, moral judgements are not capable of being true or false. A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson's versions of emotivism, and R.M. Hare's universal prescriptivism are examples of non-cognitivist theories.

4.1.4.2 Moral Realism and Moral Anti-Realism

Moral realism accepts the cognitivist view that moral judgements are truth-bearing statements. But it differs in its metaphysical positions on the question of the existence of mind-independent moral facts. According to moral realism, there is an objective moral fact corresponding to 'wrongness', that exists independent of the feelings or needs of individuals. Thus, 'murder is wrong' is a truth-bearing statement and its

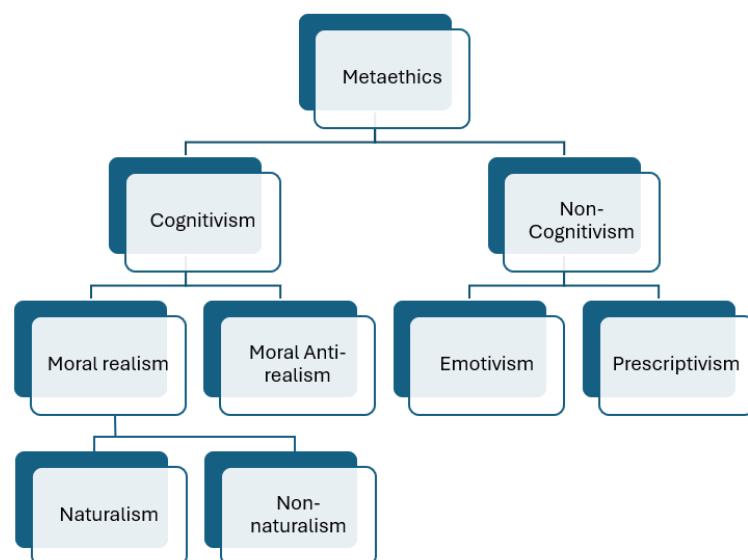
- Moral realism says that moral facts exist independent of our minds

truth value depends on whether the act of murder possesses the moral value called 'wrongness'. Under the moral realist stream, we have naturalists (ethical/moral naturalists) and non-naturalists (ethical/moral non-naturalists). The former group claims that moral properties are themselves natural entities or reducible to other natural entities, whereas for the latter, moral properties are not identical to or reducible to natural entities and have a nature of their own.

- Moral anti-realism claims that moral facts are relative or constructed

Moral anti-realism takes up the position that moral values like 'good', 'bad', 'right', and 'wrong' do not correspond to mind-independent facts in the world. Instead, they are subjective to or relative to or constructed by individuals or communities.

The chart given below is an overview of the aforementioned metaethical theories.



- Inter-disciplinary nature of metaethics

It is worth stressing that metaethics is a hard subject as it relies on and varies with the developments in other areas in philosophy. That is, if we say that moral facts exist, then we will need some ideas from metaphysics about the nature of facts and existence. Or if we think that we can only give synthetic definitions of moral terms, then we will need to be sensitive to issues in the philosophy of language regarding the analytic/synthetic distinction. Consequently, to understand metaethics, one is expected to spend time reading other areas such as metaphysics, philosophy of language, psychology, epistemology, phenomenology, philosophy of art, logic and so on. If one compartmentalises these subjects and believes that he can study metaethics in isolation, it will be much tougher.

Summarised Overview

The twentieth century Western ethical thought focuses more on the analysis of moral discourse than on developing or systematising moral theories. The deviation from the tendencies of the ethical thought in the previous centuries owes much to G.E. Moore. Unlike normative ethics that deals with the first-order questions on moral issues and moral standards, the new discipline known as metaethics is considered to be a second-order inquiry into morality. The major concerns of metaethics include the definability of ethical terms, the truth value of moral judgements, the ontological status of moral values, the epistemological justification of ethical norms, and the objectivity of ethical standards. The investigation on the various dimensions of these problems resulted in different metaethical theories. Ethical cognitivism advocates that moral judgements are truth value statements whereas ethical non-cognitivism claims that moral judgements are mere expressions of the feelings and desires of individuals. Among the cognitivists, there are realists who endorse the mind-independent existence of moral facts like natural facts and non-realists for whom moral facts are subjective and relative to individuals or communities. Under moral realism, there is ethical naturalism which says that moral values are identical or reducible to natural entities. Ethical non-naturalism adopts a contrasting view by denying the naturalistic identification or reduction of moral values and claims that moral values have a peculiar nature of their own.

Self-Assessment

1. We often discuss questions related to moral issues in our daily lives. Form a list of such questions and classify them as pertaining to metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics.
2. Analyse the ethical positions that we take up with respect to particular issues in morality and examine the underlying assumptions and justifications.
3. Reflect upon the consequences of denying the objective status of ethical norms and viewing them as relative to individuals and communities.

Assignments

1. Metaethics is a bird's eye view on ethical practice. Explain.
2. State the major metaethical questions and how that is different from traditional ethical questions.
3. Differentiate between ethical cognitivism and ethical non-cognitivism.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

Moral Naturalism

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- examine the metaethical perspective of moral realism
- compare and contrast moral naturalism and moral non-naturalism
- analyse the philosophical grounds of moral naturalism
- understand the criticisms against naturalistic moral theories

Background

Metaethics deals with the questions like whether moral facts exist, and if yes, what sort of entities are they, can morality claim any objectivity, etc. Based on the responses to such questions, different metaethical theories have emerged. Ethical cognitivism advocates that moral judgements are truth value statements. Contrary to this, ethical non-cognitivism holds on to the view that moral judgements are mere expressions of emotions or feelings. Under ethical cognitivism, there are moral realists who accept the mind-independent existence of moral facts and moral anti-realists who deny the same. A moral realist can be either a naturalist or a non-naturalist. The former states that moral terms can be explained in terms of natural sciences. The latter, however, endorses that moral terms have their own peculiar character which are not reducible to natural properties. Moral naturalism has moral realism, metaphysical naturalism and epistemic naturalism as its philosophical grounds. The specific characteristics of moral naturalism are detailed in this unit. G.E. Moore's attack on the naturalistic theories also forms part of the discussion.

Keywords

Moral naturalism, Moral realism, Metaphysical naturalism, Epistemic naturalism, Naturalistic fallacy, Open-question argument



Discussion

- Debate on whether moral claims and judgments have cognitive aspects or not

As we have studied, ethical cognitivism and non-cognitivism are two metaethical theories that differ in their stands on the propositional status of a moral judgement. Cognitivists say that a moral judgement is a proposition and thus has a truth-value. That means, we can discuss about the truth or falsity of a moral judgement like 'killing is wrong', as we do with other propositions. According to ethical cognitivism, 'killing is wrong' is considered as a proposition where the subject term denotes an act known as 'killing' and the predicate term refers to a property called 'wrongness'. The relation between the subject and the predicate can be analysed by viewing the truth value of the proposition is determined. Non-cognitivists claim that moral judgements lack cognitive aspects and are mere expressions of emotions or feelings of the speaker. They are not capable of being true or false. When we say 'killing is wrong', we are just expressing our like or dislike about the act of killing. The statement does not do anything more than saying 'Boo! Killing'. A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson's emotivism and R M Hare's prescriptivism are examples of non-cognitivist ethical theories.

- Moral realists are cognitivists who claim that there are mind-independent moral facts

There are differences among the advocates of ethical cognitivism when it comes to the ontology of the moral facts. Is 'wrongness' a mind-independent fact that exists in the objective world? Yes, says the moral realists. However, many who adhere to the relative or subjective existence of moral facts are the proponents of moral anti-realism. Moral anti-realism includes a few theories that differ in their conception of the nature of the moral facts.

- Moral naturalism says that moral values are 'natural' and can be known through empirical methods

Moral realism paves way for inner divergence while considering the nature of the mind-independent moral facts. What sort of entities are they? How do we come to know them? To the first question which is metaphysical in its context, moral naturalism answers that moral values like 'good' and 'right' also belong to the group of entities that we encounter in the natural sciences, that is, 'good' and 'right' are natural properties only. To the second question which is epistemological, the response is that moral values, being natural properties, can be known through empirical methods. Thus, moral naturalism is considered a conjunction of moral realism, metaphysical naturalism and epistemic naturalism.

- Moore argues that naturalistic definitions of moral terms are fallacious

According to Moore, the moral theories that adopt a naturalistic standpoint have committed what he calls a ‘naturalistic fallacy’. He demonstrates an ‘open-question argument’ in favour of his claim. Moore further states that moral properties are simple and unanalysable. Empirical methods are incapable of grasping them. ‘Good’ and ‘right’ have their own character which can be known only through intuition.

4.2.1 Moral Naturalism as a Metaethical Theory

- Advancement in Sciences led to the naturalistic view of ethics

Modern science has made tremendous advances in understanding the world. It is now hard to deny that we are natural and physical creatures even though human mind and behaviour have proven to be highly complex. Thus, it also would seem that the experiences like moral conviction, feeling, and choice must also be natural aspects of the human life that are open to empirical investigation. Thus, there have been huge efforts to achieve an understanding of ethics that is consistent with the views of the empirical sciences. Moral naturalism is the name given to the metaethical theory that defines moral words, such as ‘good’ and ‘right,’ in terms of natural properties. Anyone who defines ‘good’ and ‘right’ as ‘producing happiness,’ ‘conducting to evolution’ is a moral naturalist.

4.2.2 Philosophical Grounds of Moral Naturalism

- Metaphysical and epistemological grounds of moral naturalism

As it has been already known, metaethics is an inquiry into the problems based on the metaphysical, epistemological and semantic commitments of a moral judgement. This suggests that any metaethical theory that attempts to respond to the aforementioned problems has its own metaphysical and epistemological standpoints. In that sense, moral naturalism stands on the grounds of moral realism, metaphysical naturalism and epistemic naturalism. In a different word, moral realism and metaphysical naturalism form the metaphysical base for moral naturalism, whereas epistemic naturalism forms its epistemological base. According to moral realism, mind-independent moral facts exist. Metaphysical naturalism claims that everything that exists is natural while epistemic naturalism upholds an empirical view on knowledge.

A) Moral Realism

- Different views on the ontological status of moral facts

Metaethical positions are divided according to their stand on the ontological status of moral values. One of the biggest debates within metaethics is between those who claim that there are 'real' or 'objective' moral facts that exist independently of any beliefs or evidence about them and those who think that moral values are not belief-independent 'facts' at all, but are created in different ways by individuals or cultures. Proponents of the former view are called moral realists while the proponents of the latter view are called moral anti-realists. Moral anti-realism has many versions like moral subjectivism, constructivism, Ideal Observer theory, etc.

- Moral realism agrees a lot with common attitude of mankind

Many moral claims such as 'rape and murder are wrong', 'helping others in need is good' and 'theft is wrong' are treated as describing reality and not as mere opinions. Moral realism is popular as it satisfies the common attitude towards the moral commitments of mankind irrespective of geographical or cultural differences.

B) Metaphysical Naturalism

- Naturalism denies non-physical or supernatural entities

Naturalism is the metaphysical doctrine that nothing exists beyond what is open to empirical investigation. For the naturalist, all facts are 'natural facts' – facts about the natural realm with which our senses causally interact. It holds that all substances and properties are natural substances and natural properties. The theory thus denies the existence of anything supernatural. No minds or souls exist independent of physical bodies. Metaphysical essences, Aristotelian purposes or 'final causes,' are never part of reality. There are no Platonic forms, Cartesian mental substance, Kantian noumena, or any other agents, powers, or entities that do not belong to nature. It must be noted that a great part depends on the scope of the term 'nature'.

- Everything belongs to one natural order for moral naturalism

The success of the sciences has been one of the main motivations for thinkers to embrace naturalism. The sciences have proved to be powerful in making the world intelligible. They have such a strong claim to yield genuine knowledge. In a way, it is widely thought that whatever there is, is a proper object of science. In a scientific sense, naturalism denies that there is any distinctively meta-physical area of inquiry. There is one natural order that comprises all of reality, though what

exactly is the true picture of that single natural order remains open to dispute. There are no objects or properties identified or comprehended exclusively by metaphysical theorising or non-empirical understanding. There is only the physical natural order, even if there are various constituents and aspects of it that are to be described in their own non-reducible language.

C) Epistemic Naturalism

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is always inter-linked with the metaphysical views. Philosophers have sought answers to the questions such as What is knowledge? How is knowledge formed? What are the means of knowledge? and thus we have obtained the rationalist and empirical systems of knowledge. Naturalistic epistemology claims that the acquisition of belief and knowledge is a natural process, and refuses to accept the view of the rationalists like Descartes, for whom knowledge is obtained through the faculty of reason independent of experience. Epistemic naturalism is an approach to the theory of knowledge that emphasises the application of methods, results, and theories from the empirical sciences. According to naturalistic epistemology, the acquisition of belief and knowledge is a process within the natural order. This epistemological standpoint seeks an understanding of knowledge that is scientifically informed and integrated with the rest of our understanding of the world.

- Epistemic naturalism emphasises the methods of empirical sciences in gaining knowledge

4.2.3 Naturalistic View of Morality

Moral naturalist is a metaphysical naturalist who believes that there are moral facts. Also, for the moral naturalist, those facts are about the natural order and they are open to empirical investigation like the objects of the prominent empirical disciplines such as psychology, biology, and anthropology. Ethical convictions that accurately represent these aspects of the natural order are thus true in the same way that you are now reading a book.

- Moral facts are open to empirical investigation

Moral 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 like the hedonistic and utilitarian theories that provide an account of 'good', 'ought' and 'right' in terms of 'what is desired', 'what satisfies desire', 'the pleasant', 'what promotes happiness', 'what conduces to self-fulfilment', etc. Hobbes' view about the meaning

- Naturalistic definitions of morality



of ‘good’ can be taken as an example of the naturalistic definition of morality. He says in the book *Leviathan*, ‘Whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire; that is it which he for his part calleth good; and the object of his hate and aversion, evil’.

- Moral naturalism is opposed to moral non-naturalism and all versions of anti-realism

As a version of moral realism, moral naturalism is opposed to all varieties of anti-realist views in metaethics, including constructivism, relativism, expressivism, and error theory. It is against moral supernaturalism, which holds that moral facts are supernatural or divine facts. It is also opposed to moral non-naturalism, which even though comes under moral realism, holds that moral facts cannot be identified with natural entities.

- Rejection of moral naturalism shapes the 20th century moral theory

Naturalistic approaches to ethics are as old as moral theory itself. Both Aristotelian and Confucian ethics contain naturalistic elements. But moral naturalism as a distinctive metaethical doctrine has gained popularity only since 1903, with G.E. Moore’s *Principia Ethica*. The work establishes metaethics as a branch of moral theory distinct from first-order ethics by arguing against the metaethical doctrine of moral naturalism. This rejection of naturalism shapes moral theory for a large part of the 20th century. Beginning in the 1980s, however, metaethicists have been developing new ways of articulating and defending moral naturalism. It is still one of the most popular views in metaethics.

4.2.4 G.E. Moore’s Critique of Moral Naturalism

- Is ‘good’ definable as naturalists argued?

G.E. Moore provides an opening to more abstract levels of morality in *Principia Ethica* by shifting the directions of ethical inquiry in the twentieth century. Moore explains the nature of the difficulties faced by earlier moral philosophers and the reasons for the same. He then proceeds by arguing that ‘good’ is indefinable and those who have tried to define it, especially the naturalists, have committed what he calls ‘naturalistic fallacy’. The proof that he gives for this is termed as open-question argument.

4.2.4.1 Indefinability of the Good and the Naturalistic Fallacy

According to Moore, there are three kinds of definition. Anyone can logically stipulate a meaning of his/her own

- Simple terms are not prone to further analysis and cannot be defined

for a word and that is called stipulative definition. Lexical definition of a word is what we see in a dictionary as the generally accepted meaning of that word. The definition of the third kind describes the real nature of the object denoted by a word rather than merely telling us what the word is used to mean. Moore makes this clear with an example. He says that we can define a horse because it has many different properties and qualities all of which we can enumerate. But, once we have enumerated or counted all those properties and have reduced the horse to its simplest terms, then we will not be able to define those simple terms. Those terms refer to something which we think about or perceive. We cannot, by any sort of definition, make their nature known to the persons who cannot think about or perceive them. It is true that we often describe to people things they have never known before. But, in such cases also, we proceed by describing the thing as composed of parts that are familiar to us as well as them.

Moore claims that, if we use the word 'good' in 'A is good' to denote a quality that belongs to A, then 'good' cannot be defined in the last of the three kinds of definitions mentioned above. 'Good' does not comprise of parts and is a simple entity which cannot be analysed further.

- Moral terms like 'good' are simple and unanalysable

"Good, then, if we mean by it that quality which we assert to belong to a thing when we say that the thing is good, is incapable of any definition, in the most important sense of that word. The most important sense of 'definition' is that in which a definition states what are the parts which invariably compose a certain whole; and in this sense 'good' has no definition because it is simple and has no parts. It is one of those innumerable objects of thought which are themselves incapable of definition, because they are the ultimate terms by reference to which whatever is capable of definition must be defined." (Moore, 9)

- 'Good' is simple like 'yellow', but it is non-natural while 'yellow' is natural

Moore also compares 'good' with yellow. He says that 'yellow' is a simple notion and we can hardly explain what yellow is to a person who does not already know it. According to Moore, we may try to define yellow, by describing its physical properties, i.e., we can state what kind of vibrations of light stimulate the normal eye when we perceive it. However, those vibrations themselves are not what we exactly mean by yellow. Moreover, the discovery of the existence of such vibrations also presupposes the knowledge of the difference

of quality between different colours. Thus, we can only say that those vibrations are what correspond in space to the yellow that we perceive. Like 'yellow', 'good' is also simple and unanalysable. The only difference between 'yellow' and 'good' is that the former is a natural property while the latter is a non-natural property.

- Naturalistic definitions commit naturalistic fallacy

Things which are yellow produce a certain kind of vibration in the light. Similarly, things which are good may be those things which produce pleasure. But Moore maintains that as yellow does not mean 'productive of a certain kind of vibration in the light,' so good does not mean 'productive of pleasure.' The aim of ethics, according to Moore, is to discover the other property, or properties which all good things possess, besides being good. But he argues that many earlier philosophers think that when they name those other properties, they actually define good. This mistake is known as the 'the naturalistic fallacy' according to Moore.

- Propositions about the good are synthetic

According to Moore, propositions about the good are synthetic and never analytic. In an analytic proposition, the predicate is already included in the subject or it denotes the essential element of the subject. For example, 'Bachelors are unmarried males' is an analytic proposition. But in a synthetic proposition, the predicate denotes something new about the subject. For example, 'The book is red' is a synthetic proposition. Moore says that a definition in the form 'Pleasure is good' is not analytic since good is not already included in pleasure.

- Things to which 'good' becomes adjective can be defined in that way.
- But goodness itself cannot be defined in that manner

Moore also distinguishes between the substantive 'the good' and the adjective 'good.' The good (that which is good) is what the adjective 'good' applies to. Then that substantive to which the adjective will apply must be something different from that adjective itself. Now, 'the good' can certainly be defined, for instance, by saying all those things which produce pleasure are what 'the good' denotes. But it does not follow from this that 'good' is definable. There is no sense in saying that pleasure is good unless good is something different from pleasure.

4.2.4.2 Open-Question Argument

Moore argues that whatever definition be offered for 'good', it may be always asked, whether that definition is itself good. Anyone who gives the definition of goodness is only attributing goodness to something rather than identifying

- For any definition of the form 'good means X' we can ask 'Is X good' and that would not mean 'Is X X'

what goodness is. This is the open-question argument. For instance, consider any proposed definition of 'good', say 'good' means something which 'produces pleasure'. If the given definition is correct, then, when someone asks 'Is that which produces pleasure good?', the question will be self-answering; it will be equivalent to 'Does that which produces pleasure produce pleasure?' But we know that the question is not such a trivial or insignificant tautology. When the hedonists say 'Pleasure is good', it is impossible to think that they simply mean 'Pleasure is pleasure' and nothing more than that. It is clear that when we ask the aforementioned question, we do have distinct notions of the definition given (definiens), i.e., 'pleasure' and the term that has to be defined (definiendum), i.e., 'goodness'. So, Moore thinks that whatever definiens of 'good' were proposed, it would make perfectly good sense to doubt whether this definiens was good. That is, given the definition 'pleasure is good', it still makes sense to ask 'Is pleasure good?'. Moralists cannot have it both ways; the statement of their view cannot be both a significant and informative remark and at the same time true by the definition of the word 'good.'

- Philosophical attempts to define good have failed

Moore concludes that the attempts made by the earlier moral philosophers like the hedonists or the utilitarians to define 'good' in natural terms (the term natural denotes entities or properties that belong to biology, psychology, etc.) have failed. According to him, 'good' is a unique property that is beyond the domain of empirical understanding and can be known only through intuition. Moore says that Henry Sidgwick is the only philosopher of ethics who has clearly recognised and stated that moral values are unanalysable.

- Moore's arguments have been prone to criticisms

Moore's arguments against naturalists have been objected by many. It is said that not all naturalistic definitions commit the fallacy that Moore points out. He has considered only few instances to conclude that all naturalistic definitions are insignificant. Also, the open-question argument does not provide any distinct definition for goodness rather than showing the paradox in the analysis of the existing definitions. The critics also say that the argument may also be used to trivialise any definition given to moral terms.

Summarised Overview

Moral naturalism is a cognitivist and realist metaethical theory. It advocates that moral judgements are propositions having truth value and that there are 'real' or mind-independent moral facts. Endorsing the metaphysical and epistemological positions of naturalism, moral naturalism claims that moral values are natural entities or properties only. Good and bad and right and wrong belong to the same world as the objects of the natural sciences and can be known through empirical methods. They are capable of being defined using natural terms. Moral naturalism thus differs from moral non-naturalism that denies the reducibility of moral values to natural terms. The latter claims that moral properties have their own unique nature and are not known through any means of knowing except intuition. G.E. Moore argues that naturalistic definitions of moral terms commit a fallacy called naturalistic fallacy. He says that moral values like good are simple and unanalysable like 'yellow'. They are non-natural entities that are known intuitively. He also introduces an open-question argument which shows that whatever definition be given for good, like 'X is good', we can form a question 'Whether X is good' and that would not be identical to asking 'Whether X is X.' Moore's effort leads the twentieth century moral philosophy to new dimensions.

Self-Assessment

1. Discuss the significance of moral realism in maintaining ethical beliefs and norms.
2. Can ethical terms be defined in the terms of modern science? Think in pairs and share your views.
3. Make a list of various moral terms for which there are popular naturalistic definitions, and examine the same according to the issues pointed out by G.E. Moore.

Assignments

1. Elaborate the metaethical perspective of moral naturalism as a conjunction of moral realism, metaphysical naturalism and epistemic naturalism.
2. What is meant by 'naturalistic fallacy'?
3. Illustrate the open-question argument of G.E. Moore.

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Suggested Readings

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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UNIT 3

Intuitionism, Emotivism, and Prescriptivism

Learning Outcomes

In completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- develop an account of intuitionism
- evaluate the claims of ethical non-cognitivism
- distinguish between the versions of emotivism
- recognise the features of universal prescriptivism

Background

Moral naturalism and non-naturalism accept that moral judgements are truth value judgements. They also agree with the view that moral facts exist objectively in a mind-independent realm. But they differ in their positions regarding the nature of the moral facts. According to moral naturalism, 'good,' 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' are properties that belong to the natural world and can be known through empirical methods. Moral non-naturalism opposes this and claims that moral properties are irreducible to natural terms and have a unique character of their own. The advocates of such a position resort to intuition as the means of knowing moral facts, and their theory is called moral intuitionism. There are philosophers who do not even consider moral judgements as truth-apt propositions. According to them, moral judgements only express emotions, show disagreement in attitudes or are prescriptive in nature. Emotivism and prescriptivism are such ethical non-cognitivist theories.

Keywords

Moral non-naturalism, Moral intuitionism, Ethical non-cognitivism, Emotivism, Prescriptivism

Discussion

- Intuitionism considers moral propositions as self-evident
- Moral propositions are known through intuition

- Emotivism and prescriptivism deny that moral judgements are fact-stating propositions

Metaethical theories are the results of inquiry into the fundamental assumptions of forming moral judgements. The cognitivist view stands for the fact-stating nature of moral judgements, the cognitivist-realist view claims that there are moral facts which exist objectively, and the naturalistic view which accepts both the above positions claims that such objectively existing moral facts can be defined in terms of natural sciences. Moral non-naturalism, like its counterpart – moral naturalism, accepts cognitivism and realism, but differs in its treatment of moral properties as non-natural unique entities that cannot be understood in empirical terms. The philosophers who consider moral propositions as self-evident propositions which cannot be subjected to empirical investigation find the need to have a means of knowledge to grasp the uniquely existing moral values, and hence associate with intuitionism. Philosophers like Moore are categorised as moral intuitionists and their views are discussed in the first part of this unit.

It can be said that the popular moral view of the mankind moves around the aforementioned theories. A common man may find difficulties in thinking about the metaethical perspectives that go against the core commitments of those theories. Someone who says that morality is not objective and is dependent on the tastes of individuals or communities is regarded as a moral-antirealist. But such an anti-realistic position still considers moral judgements as capable of being true or false. However, there are philosophers belonging to the twentieth century who even reject the propositional status of moral judgements. According to them, moral judgements do not describe facts but express emotions and disagreement in attitudes and tastes. Their theories are known as emotivism and prescriptivism which form the second part of this unit.

4.3.1 Moral Intuitionism

In this section, we will have a look at the metaethical perspective of moral intuitionism based on its epistemology and ontology. The classical intuitionists maintain that basic moral propositions are self-evident, and that moral properties are non-natural properties.

- Moral propositions are self-evident and do not need any proofs

Richard Price says that moral propositions are self-evident in and of themselves, and so need not be proved by other means. Intuition is the way we comprehend self-evident truths, general and abstract ideas, and anything else we may discover without making the use of any process of reasoning. According to Locke, a self-evident proposition is one that carries its own light and evidence with it, and needs no other proof. W D Ross also writes that a self-evident proposition is evident without the need of any proof or evidence beyond itself. For Henry Sidgwick, a proposition is self-evident when it is clear and distinct, ascertained by careful reflection, consistent with other self-evident truths and attract general consensus. It is said that if there were certain self-evident moral propositions, there would be universal agreement among people of adequate understanding. But the lack of such unity is pointed out as an objection to self-evident moral propositions. Intuitionists might claim that majority of moral disagreement occurs because of the disagreement about non-moral facts of an issue. For instance, two people having disagreement about killing animals for their meat, may not be actually due to their disagreement regarding whether killing is right or wrong. Rather, it may be due to their disagreement on whether animals feel pain or not, which pertains to biological science.

- Moral properties cannot be defined in the terms of empirical sciences

Another distinctive feature of intuitionist thought is its non-naturalist realism. Intuitionism maintains that moral judgements have cognitive status, and they can be true or false. The moral properties of goodness and rightness are considered as simple and non-natural and thus cannot be defined wholly in terms of psychological, sociological, or biological properties. Moore is the intuitionist who has stressed the non-natural aspects of moral properties. Recall the discussion on his views in the previous unit. In his account, natural facts can be known by purely empirical means, whereas non-natural moral facts cannot be known in that way. In his view, the attempts to define the moral property of being good, for instance, in wholly psychological, biological, or sociological terms, have failed. So,

we cannot say moral truths are natural or discoverable by empirical research by the appropriate science.

- There is something related to morality that is not known empirically

Although empirical investigation can tell us many things about the world, it does not seem that it can deal with the goodness/badness of properties or rightness/wrongness of actions. It is true that the findings made by science will definitely help in revising our moral views, but they do not directly inform us on rightness or wrongness. It follows that something is there that cannot be known empirically.

- Where empirical means fail, moral intuition is conceptualised

There is a common feeling that if we talk about right and wrong, good and evil, we must be referring to properties of actions or states of affairs which are objectively present even though in non-natural states. If such a starting point is accepted, it follows that there must be some way in which we know that they are there, some faculty which comprehends them. Thus, as empirical means fail, moral intuition was conceived of.

In the next section, we will see some other theories which oppose that moral judgements are not even truth-value statements.

4.3.2 Ethical Non-Cognitivism

- Ethical non-cognitivism rejects truth-aptness of moral judgements

Moral intuitionism disposes of naturalism and replaces it with a non-naturalistic view which also got subjected to criticism by some philosophers in the twentieth century. The main line of criticism that has been directed against non-naturalism is that it leads to some sort of mysterious explanations. Moral terms are taken by non-naturalism to refer to non-physical entities which have unique super-sensible character that can be known only through a super-sensible faculty of intuition. The critics of non-naturalism or intuitionism thus diverge from both naturalistic and non-naturalistic versions of moral realism. But they could still not accept moral anti-realism which, even by giving only subjective or relative status to moral facts, claims that moral judgements have truth-value. Non-cognitivism, as the new position can be termed, denies that moral judgements are truth-aptness propositions.

Emotivism and prescriptivism are the non-cognitivist meta-ethical theories that are discussed in this section.

4.3.3 Emotivism

- Moral judgements do not state facts but express emotions.

Morality influences us a lot in our daily life. Our moral compass can guide us to think differently and do things which we earlier did not want to do. We may get emotional, we may form and break bonds with people, our anger or disappointment may get expressed, we may take some crucial decisions, all due to the moral compass we have in us knowingly or unknowingly. Emotivism captures this feature of morality because it views a moral claim as the expression of emotions. But as emotions cannot be true or false, according to emotivism, moral judgements are not fact-stating, and there are no objectively existing moral facts – natural or non-natural. AJ Ayer and C L Stevenson propose two versions of emotivism that differ in some aspects.

4.3.3.1 A J Ayer's Emotivism

- Belief has representative function while emotion does not have

Ayer's version of emotivism is the simplest and most provocative version of non-cognitivism. He denies that moral judgements express beliefs, rather they express emotions or sentiments of approval and disapproval. Since emotions and sentiments, unlike beliefs, do not even purport to represent how the world is, the judgements which express them are not truth-apt. Compare our belief about a man who beats a small child, which purports to represent how the world is, with our horror feeling for the man's act. The belief has a representative function as it purports to represent how the world is. The belief is true if and only if the world actually is in the way it represents it. The emotion of horror, on the other hand, has no such representative function. It is not the sort of thing that can even be assessed for truth or falsity. In short, moral judgements are neither true nor false. They do not state anything, but rather express our emotions and feelings.

- 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money' is just saying 'You stole that money' in a special tone.

Ayer says that the presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition does not add anything to its factual content. So, when we say to someone, 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money', we do not actually state anything more than the simple statement 'You stole that money'. The difference we experienced is that of a peculiar tone of horror along with the addition of some special exclamation marks while writing. The tone and the use of exclamation marks do not add anything to the literal meaning of the sentence. They merely show that the expres-

sion attends to certain feelings in the speaker. There is nothing in such an expression which can be true or false.

Ayer clarifies that moral disagreement is not a case of having contradictory beliefs, but rather a matter of having a clash of feelings.

- Moral disagreements are mere clash of feelings

“Another man may disagree with me about the wrongness of stealing, in the sense that he may not have the same feelings about stealing as I have, and he may quarrel with me on account of my moral sentiments. But he cannot, strictly speaking, contradict me. For in saying that a certain type of action is right or wrong, I am not making any factual statement, not even a statement about my own state of mind. I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments. And the man who is ostensibly contradicting me is merely expressing his moral sentiments. So that there is plainly no sense in asking which of us is in the right. For neither of us is asserting a genuine proposition”. (Ayer, 110)

- Moral judgements are neither analytic nor empirically verifiable and thus are not literally significant

Ayer is a logical positivist. According to logical positivism, there were only two ways in which a statement could be literally significant; by being empirically verifiable, or by being analytic. Thus, the statement ‘There are 10 balls in the basket’ is literally significant because it is in principle verifiable by observation. Also, ‘All bachelors are unmarried’ is literally significant, because it is true in virtue of the definitions of the terms it contains. If a statement is neither analytic nor empirically verifiable, it is not literally significant, i.e., not fit for assessment in terms of truth and falsity. Ayer uses this account of literal significance to dispose of Moore’s non-naturalism. Moore who claims that moral judgements are truth-apt and are rendered true or false by facts about the non-natural, simple and unanalysable moral properties, himself argues that moral claims cannot be empirically verified and that the definitions in the form ‘X is good’ are not analytic. So, Ayer concludes that moral judgements which are neither analytic nor empirically verifiable cannot be literally significant.

It is very important not to confuse emotivism with subjectivism. According to a simple form of subjectivism, when a moral judgement is made, it is really an expression of emotions or sentiments; ‘Murder is wrong’ comes out as saying ‘I disapprove of murder’. On more complex forms of subjectivism, when a person makes a moral judgement, he/she is saying something about the emotions or sentiments of the

- Moral judgements have emotive significance; they are expressive not descriptive.
- Emotivism differs from subjectivism which considers moral judgements as descriptive.

community at large; 'Murder is wrong' means that 'Most people in my community disapprove of murder'. According to subjectivism, moral judgements report something about the emotions or sentiment. Emotivism differs quite radically from subjectivism, for emotivism denies that moral judgements are propositions at all. According to emotivism, when a person judges that murder is wrong, he/she is not saying anything. Rather, one is expressing his/her disapproval. This is why versions of non-cognitivism are considered expressive rather than descriptive.

4.3.3.2 C L Stevenson's Emotivism

- Stevenson focuses on what people do with moral language

Stevenson starts with what he calls observations of ethical discussions in daily life. What do people actually do with moral language? This is the question that opens the way for all the important developments in recent moral philosophy.

- Moral judgments express agreement or disagreement in attitudes.

Stevenson views that moral judgments express agreement or disagreement in attitudes. He argues that, whenever a moral judgment is voiced, it is possible to draw a kind of distinction between what is said, or assumed, to be the factual state of affairs under judgment, and the positive or negative evaluation which is placed upon that state of affairs. He shows two different analyses of the moral claim 'This is good'; (i) 'I approve of this; do so as well' and (ii) 'I approve of this and I want you to do so as well'. So, when A says 'This is good' and B says 'It is not', then, based on the first analysis, there is a disagreement between A and B; one is saying 'Approve of this!' the other is saying 'Do not!'. By contrast, based on the second analysis, there is no necessary disagreement between A and B when one is saying 'I want you to approve of this' and the other is saying, 'I do not approve of this,' – here each of them could acknowledge both these statements to be true without self-contradiction. The first of the two analyses, is what Stevenson thinks about as happening in a moral discourse.

- The function of moral judgements is not to indicate facts but to influence attitudes.

Another feature of moral discourse according to Stevenson is that that a person who recognizes X to be good thereby acquires a stronger tendency to act in its favour than he would otherwise have. In saying that X is good, one is not simply expressing a belief about it; what he is really doing is expressing, and seeking to evoke an attitude towards it. The major use of moral judgments, Stevenson declares, is not to indicate facts but to create an influence.

- Emotivism threatens the common moral attitude

It has been said, the view put forward by emotivism produces a loss of interest in moral issues. Some people would think that if the meaning of moral judgments is basically emotive, then, it follows that, in the realm of morals, anything goes. Thus, emotivism faces the charge of the common attitude towards morality.

4.3.4. R M Hare's Universal prescriptivism

- Hare differs from emotivists by claiming a prescriptive element in moral judgements

There is another type of ethical theory which has been developed under the influence of the view that the meaning of language is to be looked for in the use to which it is put. This is known as prescriptivism and its foremost exponent is R M Hare. Hare's philosophy has some associations with emotivism but differs from it in certain respects. Hare rejects all forms of descriptivism. Moral judgments are not factual statement, whether the fact concerned be natural, as in the case of those whom Moore accused of the naturalistic fallacy, or non-natural, as in the case of Moore himself. Hare lists some important features of moral judgments – (i) they are a kind of prescriptive judgment, and (ii) they are distinguished from other prescriptive judgments by being universalisable.

- Function of moral judgements is to commend, guide choices or actions

According to Hare, words such as 'good,' 'right,' and 'ought,' have a special character. He arrives at this conclusion by reflecting upon certain features of their ordinary use. It is always logically legitimate to ask for a reason when value judgments have been delivered. For example, consider 'This is a good book,' 'This is the right road,' and 'You ought to appear for the exam.' In every case it would be sensible for the person so addressed to ask 'Why?' And the answer to the question typically would be some naturalistic description of the thing concerned, like saying, 'The story in the book is very thrilling,' 'This road is the shortest,' 'You can go for higher studies only if you qualify the exam.' The justification, or ground, of goodness, rightness, or oughtness respectively lies in certain non-evaluative characteristics of the thing or action being judged. Suppose we say two things A and B are alike in every respect except that A is good and B is not, there should be some other difference to account for. The case is of another kind when we say 'This book is exactly like that one except that this has a red cover' where the difference is non-evaluative. This shows a supervenient character of values which cannot be explained by moral naturalism and moral intuitionism. Reflecting upon the ordinary use of value terms, Hare

further says that the value terms are used primarily for ‘giving advice or instruction, or in general for guiding choices’, i.e., their use is prescriptive. Hare recognizes that prescribing is a many-sided activity: it includes such diverse uses of language like commending pictures, instructing pupils, or deciding questions of duty. His main point against both the naturalist and the intuitionist explanations is that, if you take value words to be descriptive, you put them out of work; it is then logically impossible for them to do any of the jobs which they are primarily used to do.

“For all the words discussed . . . have it as their distinctive function either to commend or in some other way to guide choices or actions; and it is this essential feature which defies any analysis in purely factual terms. But to guide choices or actions, a moral judgment has to be such that if a person assents to it, he must assent to some imperative sentence derivable from it...”. (Hare, 171)

- Moral judgements differ from other prescriptive statements in being universalisable.

Hare also accounts for the universalisability of evaluative terms. Moral imperatives can be applied not just to the agent about whom they are made but also to any agent who is similarly situated. They also apply to any action or object which has similar relevance to the actions or objects about which the judgment is made. Thus, when one calls an action right, one is not only prescribing the action in question, but also any relevantly similar action wherever and whenever it occurs. And the prescription is addressed not only to the agent whose action is assessed but also to every other person, including the speaker and listeners

Summarised Overview

Moral intuitionism is a metaethical theory that accepts the fact-stating character of moral judgements and the objective existence of moral properties. They differ from naturalism in considering moral properties as incapable of being defined in natural terms. Moral properties have unique character and moral propositions are self-evident. Empirical investigation fails in grasping them. They can be known only through intuition. Moore is considered as an intuitionist.

Emotivism and prescriptivism are two versions of ethical non-cognitivism which denies cognitive character or propositional status for moral judgements. According to A.J. Ayer, moral claims do not report facts, but express emotions. Moral judgements are neither analytic nor empirically verifiable, and hence literally insignificant. C.L. Stevenson remarks that moral discourse shows agreement or disagreement in attitudes. Moral judgements are not descriptive, they intend to influence attitudes. R.M. Hare states that the function of moral language is not to describe, but to prescribe. Moral claims purport to commend, guide choices or actions. He also advocates universalizability in the prescriptive nature of moral judgements.

Self-Assessment

1. Elaborate on the non-empirical nature of the different aspects of morality.
2. Discuss the impact of ethical non-cognitivism on the popular moral attitude.

Assignments

1. Elaborate on the features of moral intuitionism.
2. Examine emotivism and prescriptivism as metaethical theories.
3. Analyse the points given by A.J. Ayer to deny the fact-stating nature of moral judgements.
4. How do C.L. Stevenson and R.M. Hare consider a moral discourse?

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Model Question Paper Sets

MA Philosophy

First Semester Courses





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE - M23PH01DC: WESTERN PHILOSOPHY I (CBCS - PG)
2023-24 - Admission Onwards
SET - A

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark

(1x10=10)

1. What is the fundamental stuff of the universe according to Thales?
2. Name two pluralist thinkers
3. Aquinas upheld that sense experience and reason contribute to the knowledge. True or false?
4. Medieval philosophy has theological foundation. True or false?
5. Aquinas presented two ways of knowing God. What are they?
6. Name three categories of evil by St. Augustine
7. Medieval philosophy attempted to integrate the faith and reason. True or false?
8. What does Descartes mean by “cogito ergo-sum”?
9. Leibniz’s metaphysic is based on simple, immaterial and soul-like entities. What are they called?
10. Mind and body act as parallel expressions of God/Nature. Who upheld this view?
11. Descartes upheld the mind-body dualism. What does it mean?



12. Leibniz believed that all knowledge was ultimately derived from two types of truth. What are they?
13. Locke elaborates two modes of experience. What are they?
14. Who is the author of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*?
15. Whose view is “to be is to be perceived”?

Section B

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks

(2x5=10)

16. Note down the fundamental characteristics of pre-Socratic philosophy (naturalistic philosophy) existed in the ancient Greece
17. Explain Empedocles’ fundamental proposal that the world is governed by two opposing principles.
18. Comment on Leibniz’s concept of substance
19. Explain St Augustine’s higher-level of knowledge
20. The pre-determination by God curtails human agency, freedom and responsibility. Explain the medieval debate.
21. Why does St. Augustine refute skepticism?
22. Explain the distinction between disembodied and embodied cognition
23. Comment on Spinoza’s intellectual love of God
24. Summarize Hume’s radical empiricism
25. What is an abstract idea? Why does Hume reject abstract ideas?

Section C

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks.

4x5=20

26. Explain sophist philosophy
27. Describe Augustine’s Problem of Evil
28. Elaborate the synthesis of faith and reason in medieval philosophy



29. What are the major debates in medieval philosophy?
30. Discuss Leibniz theory of monadology
31. Write a short note on the differences between empiricism and rationalism
32. Discuss Hume's source of knowledge
33. Explain Spinoza's axiomatic method

Section D

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.

(3x10=30)

34. Describe the principle of non-contradiction and sufficient reason in Leibniz
35. What is the problem of change? Discuss Heraclitus' views in comparison with Parmenides's theory of permanence
36. Compare the relation between Catholic philosophy and other medieval traditions in the medieval period.
37. "The concept of the mind as a blank slate - a *tabula rasa* - prior to sense experience is central to Locke's philosophy especially the epistemology". Comment about it based on Locke's theory of ideas.
38. Why did Hume deny Causality? Evaluate Hume's views on cause-effect relationship.
39. Elaborate Plato's theory of ideas/forms along with the insights from allegory of the cave



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FIRST SEMESTER M A PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE - **M23PH01DC: WESTERN PHILOSOPHY I** (CBCS - PG)
2023-24 - Admission Onwards
SET - B

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark

(1x10=10)

1. What is the fundamental stuff of the universe according to Pythagoras?
2. What is the concept of atomism?
3. Sophists upheld that knowledge and morality are objective. True or false?
4. Plato followed the dialectical method of philosophy. True or false?
5. List four major traditions of medieval thought
6. Who made a distinction between mere belief/opinion (*doxa*) and knowledge (*episteme*)?
7. What is the concept of illumination in St. Augustine's philosophy?
8. Name two philosophers in Islamic intellectual tradition in medieval age?
9. Descartes viewed that there is one infinite substance and two finite substances. What are they?
10. What is pantheism in Spinoza's philosophy?
11. What is the blank slate theory in Locke?



12. Which modern empiricist philosopher denied a unified self?
13. Who said that substance is not an independent entity but rather a collection of ideas?
14. What does Berkeley's Subjective Idealism (the World as Perceived) mean?
15. Who propounded the mind-body dualism?

SECTION B

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks

(2x5=10)

16. Who were sophists?
17. What is the pluralistic perspective in philosophy?
18. Explain the atomist philosophy
19. God is the ultimate cause: Explain Aquinas's view of God
20. How do Descartes and Spinoza view the substance?
21. How is monism different from pluralism?
22. What is skepticism in Hume?
23. What do we mean by the naturalistic philosophy in the ancient Greece?
24. How is the God in pantheism different from the God in traditional religious sense?
25. What is Hume's concept of the self?

SECTION C

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks.

(4x5=20)

26. "Understanding nature through laws and principles of nature itself"- Explain
27. Briefly describe Atomism
28. "Aristotle introduced the concepts of actuality and potentiality while explaining the phenomena of change, growth and transformation in the nature"- discuss about potentiality and actuality
29. Write a short note on Augustine's skepticism

- 30. Discuss Descartes mind-body dualism
- 31. According to the subjective idealism, the world contains nothing but spirits and their 'ideas' - explain Berkely's subjective idealism
- 32. Discuss Leibniz monadology?
- 33. Why Locke rejects innate ideas- comment your view

SECTION D

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.

(3x10=30)

- 34. Elaborate Plato's theory of forms/ideas. Include Aristotele's response to Plato as well.
- 35. Explain the major philosophical issues in St. Agustine and Aquinas
- 36. Explain Leibniz's theory of substance and the pre-established harmony
- 37. Write an essay on Hume's problem of Induction (denial of causality)
- 38. Compare and contrast the main themes in modern rationalism and modern empiricism
- 39. Illustrate the philosophical and theological quest in the medieval period





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

**FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE - M23PH02DC INDIAN PHILOSOPHY (CBCS - PG)**

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - A

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark

(1x 10=10)

1. What is the literal meaning of the word Ṛta?
2. What is the central theme explored in the Upaniṣads?
3. According to Buddha, what is the first Noble Truth?
4. In which Upaniṣads describe Brahman as Tatjālan?
5. Which is the oldest of four Vedas?
6. Name the last Tirthankaras in Jainism
7. What language did Buddha use to spread his teachings?
8. Which two epics are highlighted for providing insights into the historical, cultural, and philosophical aspects of the Epic Period?
9. Which is the highest knowledge in Jaina philosophy?
10. What does Buddha identify as the cause of suffering?
11. List out the four periods that shaped the Indian philosophy
12. Which path, emphasized in the Bhagavad Gītā, encourages the cultivation of unwavering love and devotion towards the divine?
13. What are the four physical elements accepted by Cārvāka philosophy?



14. What is the literal meaning of the word *Bhagavad Gītā*?

15. What is the word 'nirvāna' means in Buddhism?

SECTION B

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks

(2x5=10)

16. Explain Polytheism

17. List out the Saptabhanginaya

18. Name the four stages of Atman explained in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*?

19. Explain 'Prajñānam Brahma'

20. What are the major schools of Buddhist philosophy?

21. Name the five sources of knowledge accepted by Jainism

22. Define Karma marga

23. Name the Puruṣārthas accepted by Cārvāka philosophy and Why?

24. Define sūtras and their role in shaping diverse philosophical systems during the Sūtra Period.

25. Why Cārvāka philosophy rejects immortality of soul?

SECTION C

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks.

(4x5=20)

26. Differentiate between cosmic and acosmic views of Brahman?

27. How does the Bhagavad Gita's ethical framework, offer a guide for individuals facing moral dilemmas?

28. How does the concept Kshanika vāda challenge the conventional views of continuity and permanence in the nature of reality?

29. Explain the role of the Vedas, and the impact of Vedic thought on shaping religious, social, and ethical principles of Indian Philosophy?

30. Critically evaluate the epistemological doctrine of Cārvāka philosophy



31. How does the Jain philosophical concept of Anekāntavāda, challenge traditional notions of absolutism and contribute to a more liberal understanding of reality?
32. How do the Four Noble Truths, or Āryasatyas, as expounded by Buddha?
33. Discuss the interplay between polytheism, henotheism, monotheism, and monism in Vedic metaphysics.

Section D

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.

(3x10=30)

34. Examine and analyze the fundamental characteristics of Indian philosophy
35. Explain the philosophical significance of Syādvāda in Jainism, explore its role as a method of understanding reality and expressing the multifaceted nature of truth.
36. Give a detailed account of Brahman and Atman in Upanishads?
37. Discuss the major schools of Buddhism, examining their historical development, distinctive doctrines, and key philosophical differences.
38. Examine the evolution of Indian philosophical traditions through the Vedic, Epic, Sūtra, and the Scholastic Periods?
39. In exploring the Pañcakōṣa (Five Sheaths) Theory of the Upanishads, how does the philosophical framework of these five layers provide an understanding of the self and its connection to the ultimate reality (Brahman)?



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

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Name :

**FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE - M23PH02DC INDIAN PHILOSOPHY (CBCS - PG)**

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - B

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark

(1x10=10)

1. What is the ideal of liberation in Mahayana?
2. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, how many stages does the concept of Ātman unfold in the dialogue between Prajāpati and Indra?
3. Why does Cārvāka reject the existence of the fifth physical element, ether?
4. According to the Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad, what does true enlightenment require?
5. According to Yogacara, what is the only reality?
6. In Jaina philosophy, what does 'Naya' pertain to?
7. In which Upanisads describe Brahman as Tatjalan?
8. Who engages in a dialogue in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad regarding the immortality of the self?
9. Which source of knowledge in Jainism is considered immediate knowledge?
10. What is the primary focus of the Brāhmaṇas in the Vedic literature?
11. How does Hinayana view the historical Buddha?
12. According to Cārvāka, what is considered the only dependable pramāṇa or source of knowledge?



13. What question is the Kena Upanishad named after?
14. Who are the exponents of the Yogacara tradition in Mahayana Buddhism?
15. What does the term 'Brahman' signify in its derivation from the Sanskrit root 'Brh'?

SECTION B

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks

(2x5=10)

16. What are the two fundamental categories in Jain philosophy?
17. Explain '*Ayam Ātmā Brahma*'
18. What are the 'Three Jewels' in Jainism?
19. Explain the concept of Kshanika vāda in Buddhism
20. What are the five valid sources of knowledge in Jainism?
21. What does the term 'Darśana' mean in the philosophical tradition of India?
22. What are the seven possible forms of judgments in Sapta-bhaṅgi-naya?
23. Explain the concept of Nairātmya vāda in Buddhism
24. What are the four physical elements accepted by Cārvāka?
25. Define intuition in the context of Indian philosophy

SECTION C

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks.

(4x5=20)

26. Give a brief account on the general characteristics of Buddhism
27. What is the role of Ṛta in Vedic metaphysical discussions, and how does it guide ethics and spirituality in Indian philosophy?
28. How does the Upanishads conceive Atman and Brahman? Explain
29. How do the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads contribute to the evolution of Vedic thought from rituals to philosophical inquiries?

30. Analyze the Gītā's metaphysical framework, including its views on the nature of reality and the self (Atman)
31. Why does Cārvāka criticize inference (anumāna) as a source of knowledge?
32. What is the Middle Way according to Buddhism, and how does it guide towards enlightenment?
33. Define and discuss the meaning of Mahāvākyas and their importance in Indian philosophy

SECTION D

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.

(3x10=30)

34. Examine how the Gītā integrates different paths into its ethical framework and provide guidance to spiritual and ethical living
35. Examine the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism, providing a comprehensive analysis of each truth and its significance in the Buddhist philosophy.
36. Discuss the characteristics of Indian philosophy, examining key elements that define its unique identity and its contribution to the world of philosophy?
37. Discuss the philosophical significance of 'Naya' in Jainism and its types. Explore how the concept of Naya contributes to the Jain understanding of truth and reality.
38. Discuss how the Upanishads contribute to the understanding of the ultimate reality (Brahman), the nature of the self (Atman), and the relationship between the individual and the cosmos.
39. Discuss the central tenets of Jaina Metaphysics and explore the major difference that Jain keeps with other schools of thought in Indian philosophical tradition.



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - M23PH03DC TRADITIONAL LOGIC (CBCS - PG)

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - A

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark

(1x10= 10)

1. Name the two types of logic
2. What is a 'term' in logic?
3. What kind of logic does give importance to the structure or form of the argument?
4. What forms the connection between the subject and the predicate of a proposition?
5. Which opposition represents the relationship between two propositions that have the same subject and the same predicate but differ in quantity?
6. Name different kinds of eduction.
7. For which proposition the conversion by limitation is applicable?
8. How many propositions does a syllogism consist of?
9. In a syllogism, what does the major term represent?
10. What does determine the mood of a syllogism?
11. What are the components of the disjunctive proposition known as?
12. What are the postulates of induction?



13. What is the fundamental basis for analogical reasoning in logic?
14. How the cause is defined in logic?
15. What does it mean to 'escape between the horns' of a dilemma?

SECTION B

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks

(2x5= 10)

16. What is an argument?
17. Define enumerative induction.
18. What is an analogy?
19. What constitutes a hypothetical proposition?
20. What is meant by immediate inference?
21. What determines the figure of a syllogism? Write the possible combinations of figures.
22. What is meant by an inductive leap?
23. Write a short note on the 'Barren hypothesis.'
24. Explain the statement 'cause is an invariable, unconditional antecedent.'
25. Write about the distinction between a Proposition and a Sentence.

SECTION C

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks.

(4x5= 20)

26. Explain the laws of thought.
27. Explain the difference between singular, general, and collective terms with examples.
28. Make a note of truth and validity and write the distinction between them.
29. Explain the fallacy of illicit major with an example.
30. Discuss the conditions that must be met for a disjunctive syllogism to be considered valid. Also, provide symbolic representations of valid disjunctive syllogisms with



examples.

31. Distinguish between the 'rebuttal' and 'refutation' of a dilemma.
32. What are the stages of scientific induction? Explain.
33. Explain the contrary and sub-contrary relation in the traditional square of opposition.

SECTION D

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.

(3x10= 30)

34. Make a detailed note on propositions and their classifications. Explain how categorical propositions are classified based on quantity and quality.
35. Make an elaborate note on the immediate inference of eduction and its classifications with examples.
36. Explain the rules of a syllogism with examples.
37. Provide a concise overview of Mill's Method.
38. Write a brief note on dilemmas and their different classifications with symbolic representations.
39. Differentiate between hypothetical and disjunctive syllogism and their classifications with example.



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - **M23PH03DC TRADITIONAL LOGIC (CBCS - PG)**

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - B

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark

(1x10= 10)

1. Name the different laws of thought.
2. Give an example of 'relative term' in logic.
3. Which law asserts that for every proposition, either it is true or its negation is true with no middle ground in between?
4. Name the process of drawing a general conclusion from particular premises.
5. What happens to the quality of a proposition during conversion?
6. What does determine the figure of a syllogism?
7. To which kind of propositions does inversion apply?
8. What is the form of a hypothetical proposition?
9. Name the four different kinds of dilemmas in logic.
10. Name the Mill's method that states, the common circumstances in which all the instances agree is the cause.
11. What is known as a verified theory in logic?



12. Name the different kinds of hypotheses.
13. What type of proposition expresses a conditional relationship between an antecedent and a consequent?
14. Name the first stage of scientific induction in logic.
15. What is the rule of distribution of terms in deductive reasoning?

SECTION B

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 2 marks

(2x5= 10)

16. What is inference?
17. Define the dilemma.
18. How is immediate inference different from mediate inference?
19. What is a syllogism?
20. Explain a hypothetical syllogism with an example.
21. Define a Universal Negative (E) proposition.
22. What is the rebuttal of dilemma?
23. Define the cause in logic.
24. Explain the law of the uniformity of nature.
25. Define 'Mill's method of Difference.'

SECTION C

Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks.

(4x5= 20)

26. Write a note on the distinction between an Absolute term and a Relative term.
27. Explain the distribution of terms within a categorical proposition.
28. Explain the difference between deductive and inductive arguments with examples.
29. What is the difference between Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens?

30. 'Scientific induction establishes general laws.' Explain.
31. What are the rules for a good analogy?
32. Define Hypothetical Syllogism and its classifications with examples.
33. 'Observation and experiments are the material grounds for induction.' Explain.

SECTION D

Answer any 3 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.

(3x10= 30)

34. Write an essay concerning the classification of terms in logic.
35. What is induction, and explain the types of induction in detail.
36. Make a note on the immediate inference of opposition with the help of the traditional square of opposition.
37. Explain the immediate inference of eduction and the different kinds involved in it.
38. Provide a note on cause and present the scientific definition of cause.
39. What is logic? Describe the nature and scope of logic and discuss whether it is an art or science.





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - **M23PH04DC: ETHICS** (CBCS - PG)

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - A

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer **any Ten**. Each carries one mark.

(10x1=10)

1. The meaning of virtue is _____.
2. The ethical period that starts from the 1500 onwards is known as _____.
3. Who propounded 'Virtue is Knowledge'?
4. The history of ethics can be traced back from _____.
5. _____ ethics deals with the application of norms into public or private life.
6. "Virtue means between vice and courage." Who said this?
7. Write the names of sophist thinkers.
8. Murder is wrong according to _____ theory.
9. Who was the author of *Leviathan*?
10. Who propounded by universal prescriptivism?
11. The author of *Principia Ethica* is _____.
12. Who rejected psychological hedonism?



13. Name the three ethical theories of Sidgwick.
14. Who propounded preference utilitarianism?
15. What is the meaning of 'Deon'?

SECTION B

Answer **any Five**. Each carries 2 marks

(5x2=10)

16. Define axiology.
17. Briefly explain the meaning of ethics.
18. Define applied ethics.
19. Discuss Epicurean Hedonism.
20. Define the moral integrity of Socrates.
21. Explain James Mill's qualitative utilitarianism.
22. Discuss preference utilitarianism by Peter Singer.
23. Define hedonism.
24. Explain A J Ayer's emotivism.
25. Briefly explain moral naturalism

SECTION C

Answer **any Five**. Each carries four marks

(5x4=20)

26. Socrates emphasizes the importance of knowledge. Why? Explain his concept "virtue is knowledge."
27. Aristotle's concept of ethics is eudaimonia, which means happiness. Explain.
28. Define Applied Ethics. Write its use in contemporary circumstances.
29. Differentiate between monism and pluralism
30. Weigh pleasures and pain to determine right or wrong". Explain hedonistic calculus.



31. Differentiate between hypothetical and categorical imperatives by Kant.
32. Explain the paradox of hedonism by Sidgwick.
33. Explain moral intuitionism.

Section D

Answer **any Three**. Each carries ten marks

(3x10=30)

34. Compare the meaning of 'ethics and 'morality'. Explain the scope of ethics.
35. "The pursuit of pleasure as the ultimate goal of life" – pleasure has been sought since ancient times onwards. Do you agree? Discuss your perspective about Greek hedonism.
36. Briefly explain virtue. Compare Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions virtue.
37. Define utilitarianism. Explain the difference between Spencer and Bentham's utilitarianism.
38. Define metaethics. How is it different from normative ethics? Explain its theories.
39. Explain moral naturalism and its kinds. Why did G. E. Moore criticize moral naturalism?



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - **M23PH04DC: ETHICS** (CBCS - PG)

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - B

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer **any Ten**. Each carries one mark.

(10x1=10)

1. The meaning of ethics is _____.
2. Who propounded the idea that “man is the measure of all things”?
3. Name any two major medieval thinkers.
4. ‘Our judgments about morality are relative to or dependent on something else’ is called _____.
5. “Maximize pleasure and minimize pain” – whose hedonism?
6. Who said “an unexamined life is not worth living”?
7. Write the meaning of Eudaimonia.
8. Who propounded emotivism?
9. Metaethical naturalism deals with _____.
10. Who said “moral propositions are self-evident”?
11. Another meaning of epistemology is _____.
12. What is the meaning of *Hedone*?



13. Whose concept is 'Autonomy'?
14. Who was the author of *Animal Liberation*?
15. Who said pleasure or happiness is the ultimate good?

SECTION B

Answer **any Five**. each carries 2 marks

(5x2=10)

16. Define the word morality
17. What do you understand the terms good and bad?
18. Explain Sophist Pragmatism
19. Discuss the idea of objectivism
20. Define immediate sensory pleasure by Cyrenaic Hedonism
21. Briefly explain human dignity
22. Define rational utilitarianism
23. Explain universal prescriptivism
24. Define ethical non cognitivism
25. Explain metaphysical naturalism

SECTION C

Answer **any Five**. Each carries four marks

(5x4=20)

26. Did the concept of God existed during the medieval age? Discuss
27. 'The Sophists' relativistic view of ethics reflects their relativistic theory of knowledge. Discuss Sophist relativistic theory
28. Socrates' moral integrity was deeply rooted in his dedication to the pursuit of truth.
-Explain
29. "Pleasure is the ultimate goal of life". Do you agree? Write your reasons.

30. Write a short note on the paradox of hedonism by Sidgwick.
31. Compare moral realism and moral anti-realism.
32. Illustrate epistemic naturalism.
33. Explain the open-question argument.

SECTION D

Answer **any Three**. Each carries ten marks

(3x10=30)

34. Write an essay on different ethical perspectives
35. Modern and medieval ethics represent different stages in the evolution of ethical philosophy- Explain
36. Virtue has been a prominent issue in ethical philosophy from ancient times, particularly among Greek thinkers such as Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Examine the variations in their methods of virtue ethics
37. The categorical imperative and the idea of obligation or duty are at the core of Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy- Discuss
38. Preference utilitarianism deals with subjective preferences, whereas rational utilitarianism is based on rational calculation. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of these two ethical theories
39. Describe intuitionism and emotivism and discuss how moral discourse and ethical reasoning are influenced by them.





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

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Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION
ABILITY ENHANCEMENT - M23PH01AC (DS) AESTHETICS AND ART
APPRECIATION (CBCS - PG)

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - A

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer **any Ten**. Each question carries one mark.

(10x1=10)

1. What is the meaning of the Greek word *kathairein* ?
2. Who introduced the concept of 'manifestation of *spirit*'?
3. Name the philosopher who introduced the concept *tabula rasa*.
4. "Croce regards philosophy as several modalities of mental/spiritual activity. The activities are divided into two categories." Name the two categories.
5. Which are the three levels of representation according to R.G Collingwood?
6. Who is the author of *The Principles of Art*?
7. Who defines philosophy as philosophy of the *spirit*?
8. Whose view is that aesthetic judgements are subjective?
9. Who stated that the Judgements of taste are subjective and universal?
10. Who is the author of *Critique of Pure reason*?



11. What is study of the nature of reality known as?
12. Name the two of the most important thinkers in Indian aesthetics.
13. What is the literal meaning of *Rasa*?
14. What is the essence of dance, music, painting, and other arts, in addition to theatre and poetry?
15. Write the name of two Types of *Vibhavas*?

SECTION B

Answer **any Five**. Each question carries two marks.

(5x2=10)

16. How did Hegel's idea of the manifestation of *spirit* influence Croce?
17. Why does Croce disagree with empiricism?
18. Define *Catharsis*.
19. Describe the classification of two worlds according to Plato
20. Define *shantha rasa*.
21. What is *stheyeebhava*?
22. Define *Vibhava*.
23. Describe *Vyabhicharibhava*.
24. Define *anubhava* according to Rasa theory
25. What is *sattvika rasa*?

SECTION C

Answer **any Five**. Each question carries four marks.

(5X4=20)

26. Describe the importance of cathartic experience in art appreciation by following Aristotle's thought.



27. Croce argues that beauty is the most fundamental principle- Discuss.
28. According to Croce Art is simple. Describe based on the notion of logic of art.
29. Why cannot we experience forms according to Plato?
30. Differentiate between Kant's distinction of *Phenomena* and *Noumena*
31. What are *Bhavas*? How are they related to *Rasas*?
32. How are *Shanta rasa* and *moksha* related?
33. Distinguish between *Alambana Vibhava* and *Uddhipana Vibhava*.

SECTION D

Answer **any Three**. Each question carries ten marks.

(3x10=30)

34. Offer a defense of Plato's aesthetic theory. Argumentatively substantiate your answer.
35. How does tragedy in art forms help spectators? Discuss in the context of Aristotelian aesthetic theory.
36. Discuss in detail the four-fold distinction of mind by following Croce.
37. How are aesthetic judgements assessed according to Rasa theory?
38. Critically compare the aesthetic theories of Schopenhauer and Kant.
39. How was Nietzsche influenced by Schopenhauer's concept of *will to power*?



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FIRST SEMESTER MA PHILOSOPHY EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE - **M23PH01AC (DS) AESTHETICS AND ART APPRECIATION**
(CBCS - PG)

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

SET - B

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer **any Ten**. Each question carries one mark.

(10x1= 10)

1. What do the prisoners in the allegory of the cave see and believed as truth?
2. What do the freed prisoners see as reality?
3. What is art twice removed from according to Plato?
4. What is absolute beauty free from?
5. What kind of activity is craft according to Collingwood?
6. Which realm of mind is superior to Logic according to Croce?
7. Who is the author of Natyashastra?
8. Name the third type of degree of representation according to Collingwood
9. Which is the rasa of wonder?
10. What according to Schopenhauer governs life and makes it shameful?
11. Which is the first type of representation according to Collingwood?



12. Name the unknowable reality according to Kant.
13. Write the word meaning of *Natyashastra*
14. Who introduced the concept of *noumena* and *phenomena*.
15. Name the ninth or last added rasa.

SECTION B

Answer **any Five**. Each question carries two marks.

(5x2= 10)

16. Define the rasa of fear.
17. How does art while be simple forms the basis of complexity according to Croce?
18. Art is not an assessment. Why?
19. Define 'spirit' following Hegel.
20. What is form?
21. "Art connects audience to divinity." How?
22. Define *rasa*.
23. Define *vibhava*
24. Define Catharsis.
25. Define pessimism.

SECTION C

Answer **any Five**. Each question carries four marks.

(5x4= 20)

26. Distinguish between Apollonian and Dionysian art according to Nietzsche.
27. Differentiate between art and Craft
28. How are the prisoners reached into the reality?
29. Describe the quadrilateral distinction of mind.
30. Mimesis theory holds that art imitates nature, which is an imitation of life. Explain
31. Explain the Copernican revolution in aesthetics.

32. Comment on Abhinavagupta's expansion of *rasas*.
33. Schopenhauer's philosophy is pessimistic in tone. Discuss in detail.

SECTION D

Answer **any Three**. Each question carries ten marks.

(10x3=30)

34. Differentiate between sensory and rational knowledge. Discuss based on the Allegory of the Cave.
35. Illustrate the three Misconceptions of Art according to Collingwood.
36. Write an essay on Rasa theory.
37. Write an essay on Kant's View of Beauty.
38. Explain Arthur Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory.
39. Write an essay on the classification of *rasas*.



സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

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