

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that studies what is morally right and wrong, good and bad. Ethics refers to the moral principles or values that govern a person's conduct or the conduct of a group. While morals are individual and personal beliefs, ethics often represent external, shared standards set by a profession, culture, or society. In a simple words-Ethics is the branch of philosophy that systematically studies moral principles, values, and judgments to determine what is right or wrong, good or bad, and how humans ought to act

Main Branches of Ethics

Normative Ethics: Sets the practical rules and moral standards for how people ought to behave. It uses major frameworks to judge if an action is right or wrong:

- **Virtue Ethics:** Focuses on personal character and good habits.
- **Deontology:** Focuses on strict duties, rules, and obligations regardless of the outcome.
- **Consequentialism (Utilitarianism):** Judges an action by its results, aiming for the greatest overall happiness.

Descriptive Ethics: It is also known as **comparative ethics**, is the study of people's beliefs about morality. It contrasts with prescriptive or normative ethics, which is the study of ethical theories that prescribe how people ought to act. Examines what people actually believe and do in society. It acts more like a social science or history project observing cultural habits rather than prescribing rules.

Descriptive ethics involves empirical investigation, it is a field that is usually investigated by those working in the fields of evolutionary biology, psychology, sociology or anthropology. Information that comes from descriptive ethics is, however, also used in philosophical arguments

Metaethics: In philosophy, **metaethics** (meta-ethics) is the study of the nature, scope, ground, and meaning of moral judgment, ethical belief, or values. It is one of the three branches of ethics generally studied by philosophers, the others being normative ethics (questions of how one ought to be and act) and applied ethics (practical questions of right behavior in given, usually contentious, situations). Explores the big-picture meaning and nature of moral language. It asks questions like "What is goodness?" and "Are moral truths objective facts?" rather than telling people how to act.

Major Theories in Metaethics

- **Moral Realism:** Holds that moral judgments describe objective facts that exist out in the world, independent of what we think.
- **Emotivism:** Claims that moral statements do not state facts, but instead express emotional approval or disapproval (e.g., saying "Stealing is wrong" is like saying "Boo to stealing!").
- **Error Theory:** Argues that moral judgments try to state objective facts, but all such statements are false because objective moral facts do not actually exist.
- **Constructivism:** Suggests that moral truths are not discovered in nature, but are instead created or constructed through human rational deliberation.

Applied Ethics: Applied ethics is the practical branch of philosophy that examines specific, real-world moral issues and dilemmas in fields like medicine, business, and the environment. It takes moral theories and applies them to real-life, controversial situations.

Main Fields of Applied Ethics

The field of applied ethics, as it appears today, emerged from debate surrounding rapid medical and technological advances in the early 1970s and is now established as a subdiscipline of moral philosophy. However, applied ethics is, by its very nature, a multi-professional subject because it requires specialist understanding of the potential ethical issues in fields like medicine, business or information technology. Nowadays, ethical codes of conduct exist in almost every profession.

- **Bioethics:** Deals with moral choices in medicine and life sciences, such as euthanasia, patient autonomy, and gene editing.
- **Business ethics:** Guides fair practices in commerce, tackling topics like whistleblowing, corporate fraud, and fair trade.
- **Environmental ethics:** Explores human duties toward nature, including pollution control and climate change responsibility.
- **Professional ethics:** Sets standards for honesty, confidentiality, and accountability in fields like law, engineering, and teaching.

