

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**MASTER OF ARTS-PHILOSOPHY**

**SEMESTER-I**

**WESTERN ETHICS**

**CORE-101**

**BLOCK-1**

---

## **UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

Postal Address:

The Registrar,

University of North Bengal,

Raja Rammohunpur,

P.O.-N.B.U., Dist-Darjeeling,

West Bengal, Pin-734013,

India.

Phone: (O) +91 0353-2776331/2699008

Fax: (0353) 2776313, 2699001

Email: regnbu@sancharnet.in ; regnbu@nbu.ac.in

Website: www.nbu.ac.in

**First Published in 2019**



All rights reserved. No Part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from University of North Bengal. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this book may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

This book is meant for educational and learning purpose. The authors of the book has/have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the contents of the book do not violate any existing copyright or other intellectual property rights of any person in any manner whatsoever. In the even the Authors has/ have been unable to track any source and if any copyright has been inadvertently infringed, please notify the publisher in writing for corrective action.

## **FOREWORD**

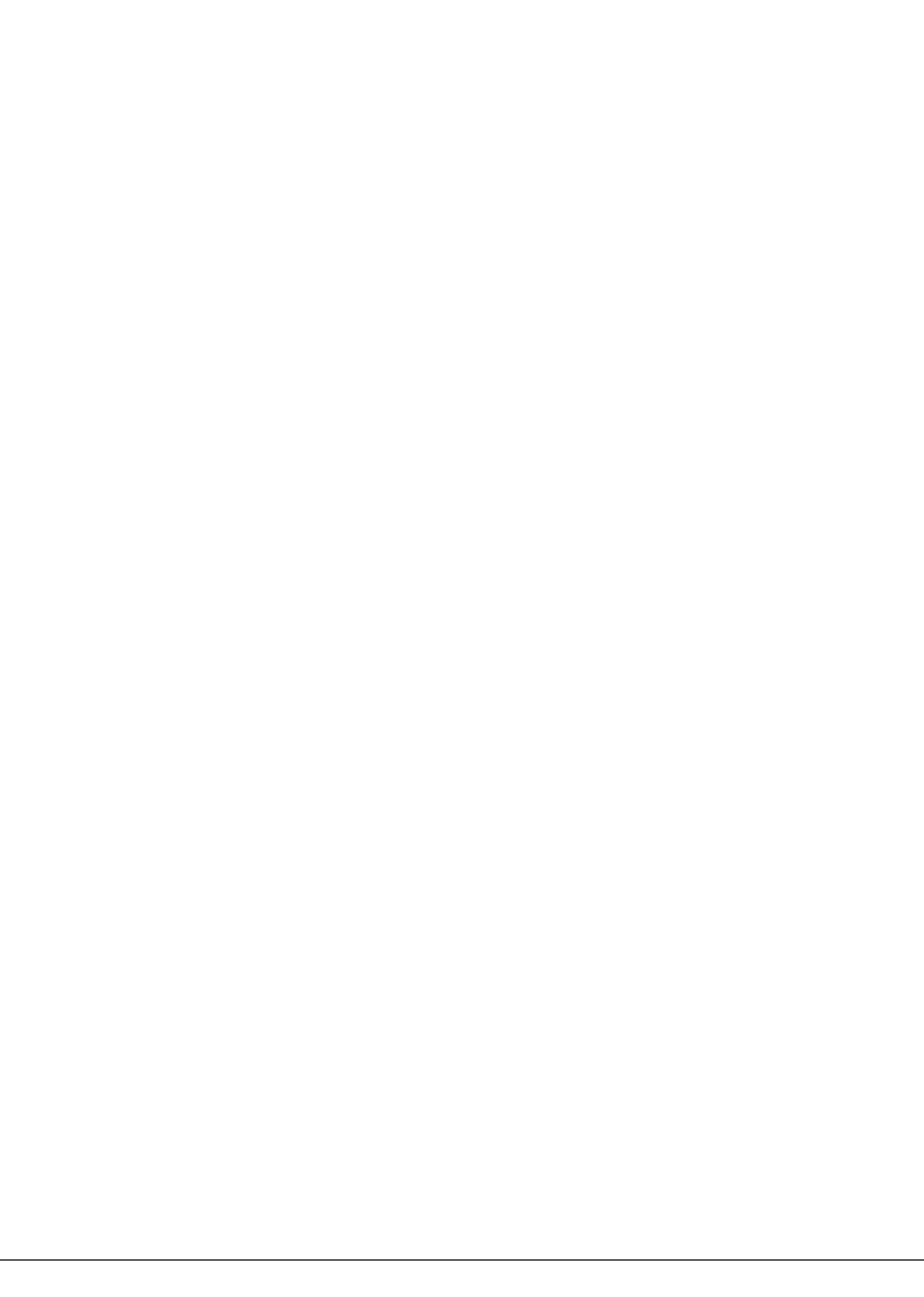
The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavors.

---



---

# WESTERN ETHICS

---

## BLOCK-1

Unit - 1: The Study Of Ethics.....	7
Unit - 2:Ethical Relativism And Ethical Objectivism.....	29
Unit - 3:Ethical Relativism And Ethical Objectivism.....	51
Unit - 4: Value .....	70
Unit - 5: Utilitarianism .....	90
Unit - 6: Kantian And Deontological Systems .....	111
Unit - 7: Ethical System Based On Virtues.....	130

## BLOCK-2

UNIT 8. Met ethics in the Twentieth Century

UNIT 9. Moral Realism and the Challenge of Scepticism

UNIT 10. Morality, Self-Interest and Future Selves

UNIT 11. Religion and ethics

UNIT 12. Contemporary Challenges to Classical Ethical Theory.

UNIT 13. Feminist Ethics

UNIT 14. The Challenges of Determinism to Moral Responsibility

---

---

## **BLOCK-1 WESTERN ETHICS**

---

In this block, we will understand the study of ethics, ethical relativism, and ethical objectivism. Also learns about Psychological, Ethical egoism and Ultimate principles. Meaning of value, its concept and transvaluation. Utilitarianism, Kantian and Deontological systems and ethical system based on virtues.

Unit 1 explains about the study of ethics. Its meaning and the morality of Socrates and Crito.

Unit 2 explains about the Ethical & Moral relativism and ethical objectivism,

Unit 3 explains about the ethical and psychological egoism and Ultimate principles.

Unit 4 discusses about the meaning of value, the concept of right and wrong and transvaluation of values.

Unit 5 discusses about the utilitarianism, restricted and extreme utilitarianism.

Unit 6 explains about the metaphysic morals, Kantian formula, moral luck, doctrine of double effect and intentions, actions, and consequences of the doctrine of double effect.

Unit 7 explains about the ethical system based on virtues. Its ethics and moral life and nature.

---

---

# UNIT - 1: THE STUDY OF ETHICS

---

## STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The meaning of ‘ethics’.
- 1.3 Plato: The morality of Socrates and Crito
- 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5 Keywords
- 1.6 Questions For Review
- 1.7 Suggested Readings And References
- 1.8 Answers To Check Your Progress

---

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

---

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the concept of Ethics and how it emerged over the centuries.
- Get an idea about the great philosophers who contributed (e.g. Plato, Socrates etc.)
- Understand the nature and scope of Ethics

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Ethics comprise the very important concepts and fundamental sets of guidelines of cultured human conduct. It is the study of universal ideals such as equal opportunity to all, living in harmony, living in peace with oneself, protecting ourselves as well as the environment we live in. There are many theories about how one should lead their lives. What is real and virtual. Philosophers of ancient times have worked throughout in searching for the answers to the questions. Motivating others to be more inquisitive and not to blindly follow the authorities.

---

## 1.2 MEANING OF ETHICS

---

### **Ethics: Meaning**

Ethics include the vital concepts and fundamental doctrine of civilized human conduct. It is the study of universal values such as basic equality of all women and men, valuing the rights of human or natural rights, respect to the law of land, responsibility for health and safety and, gradually more, also for the natural habitat and environment.

Ethics, mainly expressed in the terms of any action being fairly right and wrong or good and bad. The term is also applicable to any system or premise of just principles.

How should we live our lives in this world? Shall we aim at greatness or happiness? If we opt for happiness, shall it be for us or the happiness of the entire world? Is it right to be deceitful for a good cause? Can we defend living in richness whereas elsewhere in the world people are dying of hunger? Is it right to kill a murderer? Is it justified to let a war take place at the expense of many innocent lives? Is it right to create clones of humans or giving people the authority to be able to select the gender of their child beforehand?

These types of questions are dealt within ethics. It focuses on the primary issues of rational and right decision making, and the most important issue that ethics deals with is determining the key standards to judge between the right and wrong actions.

The expressions morality and ethics have a close relation between them. Now, the phrases like ethical judgments and moral judgments can be used interchangeably. These implementations show the wider aspects of meaning of ethics.

Even though ethics was considered as a part of philosophy, its logical nature has made it associate itself with various other domains of study, that includes sociology, anthropology, history, biology, politics, economy and lastly, theology. Still, ethics persists its difference from these areas of discipline. The reason is that ethics do not deal with facts and information like we see in sciences and various other subjects of study. Rather, it has to do with deciding the fundamental attributes of normative theories and using these principles to solve pragmatic moral problems.

### **Ethics Origins:**

When and how ethics did take birth? With the existence of humans on earth, it can be said, that in their way to find the best way to live their lives, they created a framework of few principles that could guide them about the right values, and wrong actions. This phase where human societies started acknowledging the importance of the presence of some basic standards of right and wrong behaviour, began long after their settlement as a society.

The beginning of ethics was marked by introducing the first set of principles of moral codes and conduct. We now have various accounts of myths that various societies believe in and that also gives us some virtual idea about when and how ethics began.

There are many myths about how the codes of conducts were transferred from higher power to humans. How ethics and moral values are not created by humans but are divine in origin. Code of Hammurabi, is the code of laws which the Sun God presented him. This is shown in a relief in Paris. Another example is the Hebrew Bible. This is an account of Ten Commandments that were passed by God to Moses on Sinai Mountain. (14<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E).

In Protagoras, written by Plato, it has been asserted in a mythical account about Zeus taking mercy on miserable humans who were not as strong as other creatures. To help humans Zeus bestowed upon humans a sense of morality and ability for justice and law, So that humans can live in harmony by mutual cooperation. The connection of morals with divinity proves to be a strong reason why these moral principles were acceptable. By assigning a divine origin to morality, priests made themselves its guardian and interpreter and hence saved for themselves a powerful position that they would not easily give away. This connection between religion and morality is so powerfully established that even now, from time to time, it is claimed that there is no morality in absence of religion. Therefore, it makes ethics a part of theology and not a self determining area of study.

There were some issues raised by Plato. In his work Euthyphro he reviewed the idea that it is the divine consent that validates an action a

## Notes

good action. Plato specified if this is what the case is then it cannot be said that God allows a action because the nature of the action is good. Then what is the reason behind their approval? Are their approval is purely random? So, according to Plato this was impossible and hence told that there must be some principles on which good or bad actions are based and not merely on the liking or disliking of the Gods. In modern world also, this concept is accepted because clearly the contrary implies that if, the gods gave the consent for torturing children, then torturing them would be considered as good.

### Check your Progress-1

1. What do you mean by the term 'ethics'?

---

---

---

2. What is the difference between ethics and morals?

---

---

---

### History of ethics:

The main idea of ethics origin can be traced back to the times of Ancient Greeks in western world.

The approximate time period when ethical thinking started was with the Greek Sophists (5th century BCE) and comes to an end with fall of Rome. The medieval philosophy includes the era of AD400-1400 in Western Europe, roughly between the era of fall of Rome and the Renaissance. The philosophical era that begins after Renaissance is the Modern philosophy, that continues till date.

### Ancient Ethics

#### Ancient Greek ethics: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

In the western intellectual tradition, philosophical thinking on ethical rules started with the Greek Sophists (5th century BCE). The sophists were peripatetic teachers who travelled around the Hellenic world giving teachings to young men the way of public speaking that was considered the most essential skill to gain success in the field of politics prevalent at that time. Protagoras, was one of the earliest sophists whose views were contradictory regarding the prevalence of objective moral truth and supported the idea of moral relativism. His emphasis was on the degree of the involvement of humans in the creations and practice of these moral codes and conducts. In *Theaetetus*, written by Plato, he mentioned that “whatever the city establishes as just, is just for that city as long as it judges so”.

Callicles defended the decree of powerful individuals against the weak as the weak individuals support the belief in the righteousness of equality and hence undermine the strong men. His views about democracy is, “the tyranny of the many over the exceptional individual,” and emphasized on citizens allowing themselves to be ruled upon by a strong leader.

He stressed upon the extent to which moral codes are created by the human, sets of norms followed and approved by certain communities. These beliefs are contrary to the natural law that supports natural justice that says, “might is right”. It’s the law of nature that a strong individual should have and absent in weak.

But these conventions serve only to overthrow the laws of natural justice in which “might is right.” It is a law of nature that the strong ought to possess more than the weak. As a consequence, the correct way for a strong individual to live is to follow his own interests, have the right to act in a unjust manner and get away with it. This challenge to the practicality of moral action may be seen as putting fuel for the philosophical thought of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates. But after all this, still there is a question that is left unanswered i.e., ‘why be moral?’

### **Socrates**

Socrates is regarded as one of the best teachers of ethics. He is the one who noticed “the unexamined life is not worth living”. Still, he did not preached his followers about how they should lead their lives, unlike many other philosophers. Socrates, to be exact, taught about the concept

## Notes

of inquiry. When the other thinkers boasted about their knowledge and understanding about the subjects of justice, law, temperance, piety, Socrates used to ask those thinkers to give an account, which then he would prove totally wrong. It was due to his way of inquiry, which proved to be threatening to the traditional beliefs, his enemies accused Socrates for corrupting the minds of youths in Athens and planned to have him put behind the bars and consequently he faced death. According to the conventional standards, it was easy to point that Socrates was actually involved in turning the youths of the Athens corrupt, though he himself had a belief system that supports the obliteration of the beliefs that could not stand up to the disapproval as primarily essential for the search of true knowledge. This way of thinking made him different from sophists. It was because, according to Socrates that one can acquire knowledge and sense about what virtue is and a person who is called a virtuous person have the proper knowledge of what virtue is. According to him, a person who knows what virtue will necessarily act virtuously. In today's world, this belief system may sound strange, largely because it is now easy to differentiate between what a person should do and what he actually wants from life. After assuming this, it becomes easy to imagine situations in which an individual knows what he/she should do but move forward to do something entirely different. Picking his interest over the actions he is ought to do. The distinction between virtue and self interest was not prevalent during the ancient Greek period. The Greeks supported that virtue is essential for an individual and the society. They also were of the opinion that living in a virtuous manner might not give us the desired results in the financial areas. But they did not assume that material richness is the main factor in an individual's life irrespective of their life being good or ill. As per the unity of virtue, it implies that an individual cannot have only one virtue. If that individual possesses one virtue he ought to possess all the other virtues. As all virtues are interdependent. Both Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and Plato, in the *Republic*, support to variations of this idea.

### Plato

Plato was known to be an exceptional disciple of Socrates. Plato supported Socrates' beliefs in the objectivity of goodness and the connection between knowing what is good and doing it. Plato took over the methods of Socrates of developing a case by proposing an account based on some theory and then exposing the errors and perplexity in the arguments of his oppositions. Plato presented these methods by creating his work in form of dialogues in which Socrates was shown engaging in an argument with other men, generally the Sophists. The early work of Plato showed accurately about how Socrates portrayed his views through arguments and reasoning. But the later dialogues of Plato, after the death of Socrates majorly constituted Plato's personal ideas and thoughts. In one of the famous dialogues of Plato, *Politeia* (The Republic), Socrates is a character who is challenged by the following idea: If a person has achieved a legendary ring of Gyges, that contains a magical property of making the person wearing that ring invisible. Is there any reason left for the person to act justly?

The purpose of this challenge is that according to Sophists which is still prevailing, the only reason for behaving in a just manner is that the person would not be able to get away with it (unjust behaviour). Plato's reaction to this challenge is a lengthy argument in which he develops a position that seems to go ahead of anything that the Great Socrates asserted. Plato believed that true knowledge is not knowing some specific things but having the general knowledge about specific subjects, a common idea that covers all the particular subjects.

This idea, as is known, is taken from the Socrates' idea of stressing upon his opponents to move beyond the idea of only describing a specific act that are just and good and instead describe a general account of justice and goodness. This implies that one should have general account of what is just and right, only then he can be considered to have a correct knowledge about goodness.

The argument between Sophists, who believed that righteousness and justice are relative to the codes of each society or in other words, these are just a cover up for the interests of the powerful individuals and the

## Notes

Platonists who believed that the likelihood of knowledge of an objective type of the good.

But the question arises that why should one behave in a just manner if one is making gains by performing acts that are opposite to just. This part of the challenge is still left out that was created in the tale of the ring of Gyges, and is yet to be answered. This is to imply that even though one welcomes the idea that justice and goodness are objective, it does not mean that one has the satisfactory reason to do what is actually good.

Plato believed that justice prevails in a person when the three essentials of the soul i.e., emotion, desire and intellect act in peace with each other. An individual who is unjust lives a life of unsatisfactory state of mind and experiences internal conflicts. This person never overcomes his anxiety of unquenched thirst to achieve but actually all he gets is the mere absence of desire. On the other hand a just person experiences peace and harmony as he is a rationally thinking person and a genuinely satisfied individual enjoy the pursuits of true knowledge. He also believed that the soul of the human is not immortal. And hence even if a good and just person suffers from many unfortunate events like illness, poverty, the Gods will give that person the greatest rewards in his next life.

To sum up , then, Plato stresses upon that we ought to behave justly because in doing so we are “at one with ourselves and with the gods.”

### **Aristotle**

Plato was the founder of the school of philosophy , called as the Academy, in Athens. Aristotle went to that school, there he was studying under Plato but differed in his way of thinking and gave a new direction to the western philosophy. He was also known as the “father of western philosophy”. There were a lot of differences in the way of expressions of idea and the content of their writing. But due to their time together, Aristotle’s work shows the common grounds on which he used to present his work. Hence Aristotle supports the views of Plato in which he (Plato) tells that leading a virtuous life is rewarding for that individual and for the community as well. Aristotle also accepts the idea that the most satisfying way of living is by involving oneself intellectual speculation.

But Aristotle disagreed to Plato's ideas of The Forms. According to him it is not essential to have the awareness about The Form of Good, in order to act in a good manner.

Aristotle's directory of the virtues and vices are different from the list of Christian thinkers that came later on differs from lists compiled by later Christian thinkers. Although courage, temperance, and liberality are recognized as virtues in both periods, Aristotle also introduces a virtue that was *megalopsyche* (in Greek) which means "greatness of soul" and sometimes also seen as pride. This is the characteristic of carrying a reasonable high opinion of oneself. For Christians the equivalent vanity, excess was a vice, on the other hand corresponding humility, deficiency, considered as a virtue.

**Later Greek Thinkers:**

The two schools, Stoicism and Epicureanism signify the key approaches to question of an individual should live. They dominated the later periods.

**Stoicism:**

A stoic person is the one who stay unaffected by the sorrows that are a cause of suffering to the rest of the world. If a person is rational, he will choose logic over emotions. And therefore he will remain unbothered by the status of the fulfilment of his physical desires. According to stoicism all humans have the ability to logic and reasoning. They believe in equality. For Stoics, pain is something physical and it would not affect the reasoning of a person. Stoics might favour suicide to avoid an inevitable pain.

**Epicureanism:**

Epicurus redefined the term pleasure. According to them its meaning is "pleasure of the mind" rather than "bodily pleasures". According to them the highest form of pleasure is the pleasure of achieving tranquility, bliss, peace of mind; which can be achieved by removing unfulfilled desires.

The way in which this could be achieved is by removing all but the simplest desires; these desires can be readily fulfilled even by those who are not rich. They influenced the later thinkers are directed them towards utilitarianism.

### **Ethics in Medieval ages:**

#### **St. Augustine:**

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) made the first attempt to link philosophy with Christianity. He used Plato's ideas of a just soul in which humans are basically souls, and their body's function is to help them achieve their spiritual goals. According to him, happiness is the "union of the soul with God" after death. It was reason why according to Christianity physical pleasures are inferior.

### **Reformation: The modern ethics**

#### **Thomas Hobbs**

Thomas Hobbes is an exceptional example of the freedom of mind that took birth in Protestant countries after the Reformation. He believed that there is not strict demarcation between good or bad, it is relative to a person's desire. This indicates that there are several different goods which differ for different people and not one "overachieving good" that Aristotle along with Aquinas believed. Hobbs was an ethical subjectivist.

#### **David Hume**

Hume, believed that logic cannot be the foundation of morality. His main reason for this conclusion was that morality is basically practical i.e., there is no point in judging something good if the judgment does not dispose one to behave accordingly. Reason itself, however, Hume regarded as "the slave of the passions." Reason can guide people how to best achieve their ends, but it cannot decide what those ends should be; it is incompetent of affecting one to do some action except in accordance with some former want or desire. Hence, reason is incapable to create moral judgments.

#### **Immanuel Kant**

Kant stressed upon the idea that actions that are a result of desire are not free. Only rational actions can result in achieving freedom. Therefore rational action cannot be dependent on an individual's personal desires but "must be action in accordance with something that he can will to be a universal law". This view is equivalent to the idea of "general will" that opposes an individual's will, a person share with the entire community.

**Hegel**

Hegel's beliefs said that freedom cannot be achieved until the humans realize that they are a manifestation of this universal mind. Humans ought to feel at home in the universe.

**Friedrich Nietzsche**

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) criticized Judeo - Christian tradition. According to him Jewish ethics were "slave morality" based on jealousy. In his opinion, Christian were even worse, it makes a virtue out of humility, patience poverty and do not inspire to struggle for what they want. This faith does not support strength. Such an ethics, Nietzsche declared, weaken the human drives that have led to the greatest human achievements. Nietzsche thought that the period of traditional religion was has come to an end.

**Check your Progress-2**

3. Discuss the viewpoints of Socrates?

---

---

---

4. How did the Stoics and Epicurus influenced the later thinkers?

---

---

---

5. What did the theories of Immanuel Kant said about ethics?

---

---

---

**Ethics in 20<sup>th</sup> century:**

As described in the brief account above, the history of Western ethics from the time of the Sophists towards the end of 19th century indicated three invariable themes. First one shows that , there is the in-discrepancy about whether ethical judgments are truths about the world or only contemplation of the desires of those who make those judgements. Secondly, there is the attempt to explain, that doing the right thing is a rational thing to do. And thirdly, there is the argument about the standard of right and wrong and essence of goodness. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century these themes are applied in solving practical moral issues. The history of ethics from 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present time will be divided into their main areas: Meta-ethics, Normative ethics and applied ethics.

**Meta-ethics** works with the nature of moral judgements. It deals with the meaning of ethics and origin of ethics.

**Normative ethics** determines the standard of moral judgements and criteria for determining about right and wrong.

**Applied ethics** include the current and essential topics like animal rights, ethical issues in medical procedures (bioethics), ethical issues in research and development, war, capital punishment.

**Check your Progress-3**

6. How is ethics after 20<sup>th</sup> century different from the ethical ways of earlier times?

---

---

---

7. Briefly explain the three divisions in which ethics is divided in 20<sup>th</sup> century?

---

---

---

---

## 1.3 PLATO: THE MORALITY OF SOCRATES AND CRITO

---

The life of Socrates illustrated one example of a person who is seeking a justification for his or her moral behaviour. Socrates focuses on using logic and reasoning instead of his cultural values, to decide whether a behave is right or wrong. The dialogue 'Crito' throws a light upon the views of Socrates, who is stressing upon the use of a moral point of view rather than blindly following the point of view of an individual's religion or society.

### **The tale:**

Socrates was a very great philosopher, born in Athens (469 - 399 B.C). He was imprisoned and was waiting for his execution. He was found guilty of impiety, which implies that he was a non believer of the Gods and was found inventing new gods. Secondly, he was accused for corrupting the minds of youth of Athens, and thirdly, studying the things present below the earth and in the sky. At that period, a ship was sailing on a sacred operation and no killings were to be done during its absence. Because of that Socrates was restrained to his cell for a month. There was an old friend of Socrates, named Crito, who came to visit Socrates two days prior to his execution. Crito's intention for visiting Socrates was to prepare Socrates to escape from the jail and migrate to another country. But Socrates had something else in his mind altogether. Socrates asserts that by escaping the jail, he would be violating the laws. And hence, the question that arises in this dialogue was, "Ought I to break the laws?" The chief content of the dialogue consists of Socrates response and analysis to Crito's arguments about why Socrates should escape the jail.

The main contents of the dialogue:

Introduction

Crito's plan of action

The opinion of many versus the opinion of experts

The principle and its consequences that says "one should never do wrong."

### **The laws**

Introduction: In the first segment of the dialogue, the characters, Socrates and Crito are introduced, and the audience get to know about the situation of Socrates. After analysing the dream of Socrates and the news brought to him by Crito about his execution, it is clear that execution will take within next 2 to 3 days.

### **Brief about the characters:**

**Socrates:** In Plato's dialogue, Socrates is the hero (for the audience). The audience get to know that he is calm and composed, cheerful and being his usual self.

**Crito:** The audience learns that, Crito is an old friend of Socrates. In addition to that, he is kind and loyal friend of Socrates who could readily take up any risk to help him. As is evident in the dialogue Crito lacks the knowledge about the ethical principles that Socrates was talking about, hence can say that he might not have received sufficient philosophical education. In the text the audience will see that Crito is bribing to guard to enter into the cell and was ready to do this again if needed. In other context, Socrates characterized Thessaly (where Crito's friends were living) as a place without order and licence. Above two instances show that Crito's ethics were questionable.

### **Crito's Proposal:**

Early in the morning, Crito reaches Socrates' prison, before the visitors may come to visit the prisoners. He bribes the guards for entering the jail and sits beside Socrates until he is awake. Crito has come there to rescue Socrates as he gets the news about Socrates' execution that will be in next few days. His plan was to make Socrates escape the jail. But finding Socrates unaffected by the news of his execution and unwilling to escape, he starts explaining to him the reasons why he should leave the jail with him.

Crito explains Socrates that he would not want to lose a friend like Socrates. And if he refuses to leave jail, Crito and others friends of Socrates will come in bad light in the view of many. There is a proper planning of escape and this was the right time to do it. There is no issue

regarding money matters and expenses that will result from the execution of this plan. Crito tells Socrates that in Thessaly, safe heaven can be found. And above all, Socrates have children, who would need him. In his absence they will be deprived of a proper livelihood and might suffer from crisis situations. By staying in the prison, soon he will face the state assisted suicide. Such a deliberate attempt to accept his own death is not right is shameful and not honourable. It's not Socrates' duty to accept the punishment as he was wronged the State itself.

**The opinion of many versus the opinion of experts:**

To the arguments presented by Crito where Socrates' other friends and Crito himself would come in the bad light if they did not help Socrates, Socrates responds by saying that opinions of majority is not what he is concerned about. He gives the following reasons:

First, the opinion of majority many a time proves to be wrong and following it is equal to fooling one-self and cause the greatest harm. On the contrary one should strive to be wise. Here Socrates' value system gives total preference to wisdom. Giving validity to an opinion of majority on the bass of it being popular is foolish. Socrates makes use of an example where he says that an athlete listens to the opinions of his physician rather than that of his fans, because a physician is an expert and will provide the athlete with correct information.

Giving way to Socrates' argument in support of experts, who can be an expert in deciding whether to escape the prison or not? Is it the Philosophers? Or is it Socrates? Or Nobody? The dialogue provide no specific answer to this query, but the fact that he continues with considering the matter for himself tells us that the answer is between one of the latter two.

**The principle and its consequences that says “one should never do wrong.”**

After rejecting Critos's idea about the opinion of the many, Socrates arrives to the main argument of the dialogue. According to Socrates, The central moral principle suggests that one should never do injustice. This asserts is neither a reason nor a final conclusion.

### **The Argument for the Central Moral Principle:**

1. What is the significance of life is only to live a good life.
2. If our body is contaminated, then our life is not a good life and is not worth living.
3. The soul, which is the part of a person that is concerned with right and wrong, carried more value than body. And if soul is found to be corrupted then life is not worth living.
4. The soul gets deteriorated by injustice and can be healed by justice.
5. We should never do injustice.

In this Socrates avoids using the word “soul”, while he has used it in other dialogues, like in Apology. This shows that the word shows a *new* concept, which is not known to those lack an education in philosophy, in this case, Crito. In fact, we can see here almost the birth of a new philosophical idea that is so known to us.

In the argument presented by Socrates, it suggests that doing injustice to others would not really harm others but instead will corrupt the soul of the wrong doer. By doing wrong action one is incurring damage to their soul, which will get eaten away step by step.

The Consequences of the Central Principle:

One is ought to do the right thing.

Therefore, one must not do wrong to others even if one is harmed.

One should never injure another. Never injure other person in return also.

Therefore, even if one is oneself injured, one should not injure the other in return.

The main questions:

- Is escaping from jail is a wrong action?
- Is anyone harmed by Socrates' escape?

### **The Laws**

The laws says that by running away from prison Socrates would violate the laws and the state since the state is shattered if the judgement of its courts have no force but neutralized by private persons. Objection (suggested by Socrates and heartily agreed heartily by Crito): it was the city who wronged Socrates and it was not right. There was an objection that it was the states that wrong Socrates and not the Laws. To which Crito also agreed.

Answering this objection the Laws provide three additional point of views ( the Laws do not talk about that Socrates should not damage the state, according to his own moral values, even if he was hurt by the state first).

The Laws also suggest that concerning them we have the choice of obeying it or persuading the state against it?

For Socrates and for general citizens:

Following the laws and respecting them, carrying out our duties as a citizen, persuading the state if there is something wrong n the laws and accepting the penalty for doing wrong.

The question that now arises is whether this argument suggests people to accept the penalty even if they are innocent? Answer to this is even if one assumes such an argument; it is difficult to believe that one is compelled to admit to an unjustifiable punishment. Furthermore, this unforgiving penalty might be considered as a infringement of agreement on the part of the Laws/State.

Finally, as specified by Robert Nozick, following are the two principles that are readily acceptable:

The ones who prove to be guilty should be punished (for the well being of our society)

No innocent should face any punishment.

The two principles, on the other hand, could not be accepted, given the rational limitations of human knowledge. And therefore, it is an impossible benchmark, that no innocent must ever be punished.

After going through the whole dialogue, it becomes clear that Socrates is a philosopher whose life's main goal is to find the truth and developing virtue. He is not going to adjust according to others opinion of him. Even if one threatens him, he is unaffected by that and continues to believe in his values and principles. The story of his life show that he lived it with a high degree of integrity and is resolute in his mind that he is going to stay that way until his death in the prison.

---

## **1.4 LET US SUM UP**

---

Ethics is only feasible since we can operate against our character, based on our principles. It prevents us from merely unfolding what is liable to

take place, and allows us to make decision about what *must* happen. Out of all, doing which action would be considered the best possible way? What choices and decisions would lead us towards the reality? These are the queries ethics seeks to answer.

Ethics urge us to understand our responsibility for our beliefs and our behaviour, and live our lives in best possible way.

Ethics isn't the only a source of ideas about what a "best" decision would seem like. In some individual's opinion it might be to make advances towards their aim n life and achieve success and their look towards fulfilling their objectives (like making money). And some might prefer to the most popular choice.

At the core of these is a piece of ethics, but each is a distracting the reader from the questions that really matter. Ethics tells the best choices as the one which best achieves what is right and constant with the nature of the things in question. These are referred as, 'purpose', 'principles' and 'values'.

Ethics is the process of inquiring, finding and supporting our purpose, principles and values. It's about finding our purpose, the meaning of our existence. Acquiring wisdom about the right way of living each moment. Committing to our values and principles even in the worst situations in our lives.

---

## 1.5 KEYWORDS

---

**Meta-ethics:** Meta-ethics is the effort to recognize the nature of mind (metaphysical), philosophical theory of knowledge (epistemological), philosophical study of language and texts (semantic), and psychological commitments of moral thoughts and practices.

**Normative ethics:** It deals with the fundamental moral standards that are justified.

**Bioethics:** the study of characteristically controversial ethics that occurs in advanced medicine and biology. It is also moral standards which sets some principles to be followed while making medical policies, practice, and research.

**Objectivism:** It is the philosophy of rational individualism.

**Subjectivism:** is the premise that perception (or consciousness) is truth, and that there is no secondary, accurate reality that prevails independent of perception. The character of reality is dependent on the consciousness of the individual.

**Relativism:** the set of guidelines that says, morality, knowledge, and truth exist in relation to society, or culture or historical context, and are not completely absolute.

---

## 1.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

---

1. What is the meaning of ethics? When did it come into existence?
2. Write a brief account of the ancient Greek philosophers?
3. Give a brief account of the role of St. Augustine in philosophy?
4. What are the ways in which 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers different from the early philosophers?
5. Brief account of the arguments made in Plato's dialogue Crito?

---

## 1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

1. Taylor, Richard (2000). *Good and Evil*. Prometheus Books.
2. Mill, J. S., & Sher, G. (1979). *Utilitarianism*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co.
3. Annas, J., and Rowe, C., (2002). *New Perspectives on Plato, Ancient and Modern*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
4. Nehamas, A., (1999). *Virtues of Authenticity; Essays on Plato and Socrates*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

---

## 1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

1. Ethics include the vital concepts and fundamental doctrine of civilized human conduct. It is the study of universal values such as basic equality of all women and men, valuing the rights of human or natural rights,

respect to the law of land, responsibility for health and safety and, gradually more, also for the natural habitat and environment. Ethics, mainly expressed in the terms of any action being fairly right and wrong or good and bad. The term is also applicable to any system or premise of just principles..... (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q1.)

2. The difference between morals and ethics are, morals are the codes of conduct created by a group of people. They tell us about with right and wrong actions. On the other hand, ethics tells the character of a person. It also determines whether a person's actions are just or unjust in a specific situation. (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q2)

3. **Socrates** is regarded as one of the best teachers of ethics. He is the one who noticed "the unexamined life is not worth living". Still, he did not preached his followers about how they should lead their lives, unlike many other philosophers. Socrates, to be exact, taught about the concept of inquiry. When the other thinkers boasted about their knowledge and understanding about the subjects of justice, law, temperance, piety, Socrates used to ask those thinkers to give an account, which then he would prove totally wrong. It was due to his way of inquiry, which proved to be threatening to the traditional beliefs, his enemies accused Socrates for corrupting the minds of youths in Athens and planned to have him put behind the bars and consequently he faced death.

According to the conventional standards, it was easy to point that Socrates was actually involved in turning the youths of the Athens corrupt, though he himself had a belief system that supports the obliteration of the beliefs that could not to stand up to the disapproval as primarily essential for the search of true knowledge. This way of thinking made him different from sophists. It was because, according to Socrates that one can acquire knowledge and sense about what virtue is and a person who is called a virtuous person have the proper knowledge of what virtue is. According to him, a person who knows what virtue will necessarily act virtuously. In today's world, this belief system may sound strange, largely because is now easy to differentiate between what a person should do and what he actually wants from life. After assuming this, it becomes easy to imagine situations in which an individual knows what he/she should do but move forward to do something entirely different. Picking his interest over the actions he is ought to do.

The distinction between virtue and self interest was not prevalent during the ancient Greek period. The Greeks supported that virtue is essential for an individual and the society. They also were of the opinion that living in a virtuous manner might not give us the desired results in the financial areas. But they did not assume that material richness is the main factor in an individual's life irrespective of their life being good or ill. As per the unity of virtue, it implies that an individual cannot have only one virtue. If that individual possesses one virtue he ought to possess all the other virtues. As all virtues are interdependent. Both Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and Plato, in the *Republic*, support to variations of this idea. .... (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q3.)

4. A stoic person is the one who stays unaffected by the sorrows that are a cause of suffering to the rest of the world. If a person is rational, he will choose logic over emotions. And therefore he will remain unbothered by the status of the fulfilment of his physical desires. According to stoicism all humans have the ability to logic and reasoning. They believe in equality. For Stoics, pain is something physical and it would not affect the reasoning of a person. Stoics might favour suicide to avoid an inevitable pain. Epicurus redefined the term pleasure. According to them its meaning is "pleasure of the mind" rather than "bodily pleasures". According to them the highest form of pleasure is the pleasure of achieving tranquillity, bliss, peace of mind; which can be achieved by removing unfulfilled desires. The way in which this could be achieved is by removing all but the simplest desires; these desires can be readily fulfilled even by those who are not rich. The Epicureans influenced the western thinkers by creating precursors to the ideas like a utilitarian ethics based on pleasure and the Stoics idea of equality also influenced many thinkers of the modern era. .... (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q4.)

5. Kant stressed upon the idea that actions that are a result of desire are not free. Only rational actions can result in achieving freedom. Therefore rational action cannot be dependent on an individual's personal desires but "must be action in accordance with something that he can will to be a universal law". This view is equivalent to the idea of "general will" that opposes an individual's will, a person shares with the entire community. .... (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q5.)

6. The history of Western ethics from the time of the Sophists towards the end of 19th century indicated three invariable themes. First one shows that, there is the in-discrepancy about whether ethical judgments are truths about the world or only contemplation of the desires of those who make those judgements. Secondly, there is the attempt to explain, that doing the right thing is a rational thing to do. And thirdly, there is the argument about the standard of right and wrong and essence of goodness. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century these themes are applied in solving practical moral issues. The history of ethics from 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present time will be divided into their main areas: Meta-ethics, Normative ethics and applied ethics. .... (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q6.)

7. The history of ethics from 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present time will be divided into their main areas: Meta-ethics, Normative ethics and applied ethics.

**Meta-ethics** works with the nature of moral judgements. It deals with the meaning of ethics and origin of ethics.

**Normative ethics** determines the standard of moral judgements and criteria for determining about right and wrong.

**Applied ethics** include the current and essential topics like animal rights, ethical issues in medical procedures (bioethics), ethical issues in research and development, war, capital punishment. .... (answer for Check your Progress 1, Q7.)