

1. How does context or situation determine whether an action is ethical or not? Illustrate.

Introduction

What is wrong or right depend on specific situation and personal judgment. , a right or wrong action cannot be viewed in isolation. It depends on circumstances and underlying purpose. Every individual based on his teachings and understanding has the capability to know what is right or wrong.

Body

Ethics is situational:

In ethics, sometimes right and wrong or ethical actions depend upon the situation. There are no universal moral rules or rights - each case is unique and deserves a unique solution. Situation ethics rejects 'prefabricated decisions and prescriptive rules'. It teaches that ethical decisions should follow flexible guidelines rather than absolute rules, and be taken on a case by case basis. So a person who practices situation ethics approaches ethical problems with some general moral principles rather than a rigorous set of ethical laws and is prepared to give up even those principles if doing so will lead to a greater good.

Context or situation determine the action is ethical or not

Illustration:

- What is wrong or right depend on specific situation and personal judgment. Suppose you found a person victim of road accident and needs to be immediately carried to hospital, otherwise he may die. He needs to be given immediate attention. No vehicle is available, but you see a vehicle nearby parked. It is not a good to take away somebody's vehicle; however, there is the person who needs help in terms of immediate shift to hospital as otherwise he is on the brink of death. While taking vehicle in the ordinary course may be wrong, but most would also violate that rule in a case like this. Immediately, we would feel that it is right to save the life of the road accident victim. It is because the moral value of life is a higher value than that of protecting property.
- Telling lie is an action generally considered to be wrong by most. Telling truth is considered a virtue as much damage is done to others and to society from too much dishonesty. But what if telling the truth violates higher value in life? A killer asks about whereabouts of your neighbor with intention to harm and murder him. What a person will do in this situation. Hold on to truth and allow your neighbor to be robbed of his valuables and life. Despite the fact that people advocate telling truth is a virtue, telling a lie is the right thing to do in that particular situation. It achieves the higher moral value, the preservation of the life and valuables of your neighbor.

Conclusion

Since circumstances alter cases, situations hold that in practice what in some times and places we call right is in other times and places wrong. Situation ethics teaches that particular types of action don't have an inherent moral value - whether they are good or bad depends on the eventual result.

2. How does ethical conduct deepen trust and forge social capital? Examine.

Introduction

Ethics is a set of standards that society places on itself and which helps to guide behavior, choices and actions. Ethical conduct is characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal, professional and academic relationships. Ethical conduct respects the dignity, diversity and rights of individuals and groups of people.

Body

Ethical conduct deepens trust and forges social capital

Social capital broadly refers to those factors of effectively functioning social groups that include such things as interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity.

- Ethical conduct forge relations to foster bonding, bridging and linking , build solidarity and trust; foster collective action and cooperation; strengthen communication and knowledge exchange; create capacity for social cohesion and inclusion and builds Social capital.
- There are several ways in which ethical conduct develops social capital that can improve government performance. First, it can broaden government accountability; government must be responsive to citizens at large rather than to narrow sectarian interests. Secondly, it can facilitate agreement where political preferences are polarized. Thirdly, it induces innovation in policymaking. Finally, it enhances the efficiency of delivery of many services at the local level through involvement of residents.
- Ethical conduct such as Accountability of the government is the most important means by which social capital influences performance. Trust and civic minded attitudes can improve governmental performance by affecting the level and character of political participation, reducing “rent seeking” and enhancing public-interested behavior.
- Social capital can bring convergence among different players on important issues. Political leaders in the developed regions are more willing to compromise with the views of opponents. Where trust and norms of reciprocity are stronger, opposing sides are more likely to sit together and

resolve their disputes. On the other hand, where fewer citizens are motivated by a sense of civic obligation to stay informed and to participate in political life, the chances of a dispute settlement between two opposite sides become weak.

- Large structured groups with well-defined organizational patterns and goals. They do not have an apparent profit motive, but generally work on financially sustainable basis. Such an organization does have a financial base of its own, but often gets considerable support from external agencies as well e.g. Societies, Trusts, and Waqfs.
- Closer ties between corporations and community. Through CSR the existence of corporations in the social system is felt beyond a perception that corporation is a place just to get employment and producers of goods and services. By doing so, corporations and community would stay in peace and harmony. This becomes a social capital that is essential in community development.
- Adherence to ethical principles of truthfulness, integrity and probity makes a person more trustful and helps in development of social capital.
 - For Example: E-Shridharan, the metro man, who is known for his probity and integrity is one of the best example which demonstrates how ethics can contribute to social as well as human wellbeing.

Conclusion

If there was a decline of ethical conduct in the society, it would lead to trouble. People might indulge in self-aggrandizement, Corruption, disregard environmental damage, etc. Though this might in the short run seem beneficial and profitable, in the long run it would be detrimental to the individual as well as community. Human wellbeing comprises of numerous dimensions from emotional wellbeing to healthy life. Without ethical conduct there would be all-round chaos and confusion. Thus, ethical conduct helps in securing social and human wellbeing.

3. Can law alone ensure ethical conduct? Critically examine.

Introduction

Laws are rules of conduct that government creates and requires people to obey whereas ethics refers to human conduct based on a set of established standards. Law and Ethics are considered to be the two tools for controlling human conduct so as to make it conducive for civilized social existence.

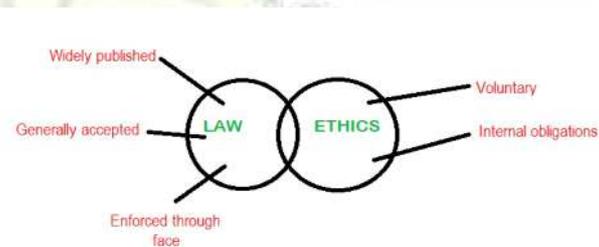
Body

Ethical conduct in human society is considered paramount as it is based on critical thinking and reason. Socrates is known as the father of Ethics, who influenced generations of thinkers after him like Plato, Aristotle, etc.

In this regard, there multiple sources of ethical conduct like religion, law, society, individual, knowledge, time and other sources. Here, law is defined as a rule that has been legally made to apply to everyone in a civilisation. In a democratic system, a law is phrase that has been passed by a legislature.

Based on society’s beliefs, laws are created and enforced by governments to mediate in our relationships with each other. Laws must be followed by all, including private citizens, groups and companies as well as public figures, organizations and institutions. Laws set out standards, procedures and principles that must be followed.

While laws carry with them a punishment for violations, ethics does not. In ethics everything depends on the person’s conscience and self worth. For example, driving carefully and within the speed limit because a person not wanting to hurt someone is ethical, but if one drives slowly because he/she see’e a police car behind, this suggests fear of breaking the law and being punished for it.



Ethics comes from within a person’s moral sense and desire to preserve his self respect. It is not as strict as laws. Laws are codifications of certain ethical values meant to help regulate society, and punishments for breaking them can be harsh and sometimes even break ethical standards.

For example, take the case of the death penalty. Everyone knows that killing someone is wrong, yet the law punishes people who break the law with death.

Furthermore, laws play role as a punitive tool towards ensuring ethical conduct in humans in a civilised society. Child labour acts in statute books around the world are a case in point where ethical behavior of not employing child labours is ensured through legislations for the same.

At the same time, it is important to remember that following law doesn't always ensure ethical conduct for humans. An illegal act may be deemed more ethical than when following law to the book. For example, the act of whistleblowing to bring out information important for the society can be seen as illegal but many consider it an ethical conduct. The case of Edward Snowden and Julian Assange clearly demonstrates this phenomenon.

Rigid implementation of laws also cannot serve the purpose of ethical conduct as is evident from the recent Supreme Court judgement with respect to Forest Rights

Act for tribals in India. Here, many tribals have been ordered to vacate their traditional dwelling places owing to SC's interpretation of archaic laws.

In a rules based society, laws serve the important function of regulating society towards a harmonious existence without which there would be chaos and anarchy, 'matsyanyaya' as has been termed in ancient Indian texts.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be seen that laws can ensure ethical conduct provided that the law making procedure is guided by ethical thinking while also realising that ethical conduct of an individual has many inspirations where internal human conscience is the most important one driving the ethical behavior of humans.

4. What is utilitarianism? Is it a desirable philosophy for a civil servant? Substantiate your views on the issue.

Introduction

John Stuart Mill defines utilitarianism as a philosophy in ethics which means that an action is right in proportion as it tends to promote happiness; wrong as it tends to produce the reverse of happiness. Happiness is intended pleasure and absence of pain. For a civil servant, the philosophy calls for an action that brings greatest happiness to the greatest number of people.

Body

Desirable for a civil servant:

Proponents like Jeremy Bentham have argued that utilitarianism ensures objectivity, quick decision making and brings welfare to the maximum number of people. For instance,

- Most of the policies are done in the spirit of bringing greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. E.g. Aadhar is made mandatory in the public distribution system in spite of it having an error up to 1% and some may suffer due to this.
- It is right as far as upholding public order. E.g. A district collector ordering preventive arrests ahead of possible communal clashes is for the greater good though it affects negatively some of the sections of the society.
- To safeguard the security, unity and national integrity. E.g. the restrictions imposed in Jammu and Kashmir though it affects some of the fundamental rights of the citizens.
- It sets a precedent and a standard in decision making which can be used to take timely decisions. E.g. imposition of sec.144 in larger public interest.

Not Desirable for a civil servant:

However, utilitarianism philosophy is not suitable in the action of a civil servant in every instance. A civil servant serves every section - majority and minority which might be compromised if the utilitarianism philosophy is followed in every situation.

E.g. Bringing down of illegal shops run mostly by poor on road sides is in line with policy and also is good for maximum of people. However, keeping in mind, the livelihood needs of the poor, the demolition process should be such that enough time is provided to the poor so as to shift and if possible, must be provided with an alternative.

Further, Human rights are usually said to be inalienable and universal, and some even believe that they are absolute. A civil servant has to uphold individual rights along with welfare of the public though it goes against utilitarian concept.

E.g. Homosexuality was a criminal offence until recently who may form a minority and considering the views of majority which is against homosexuality, it is ethical. However, for a civil servant it is not because he/she is responsible for every individual right.

Furthermore, for a police officer – means are as important as ends. E.g. Torturing a suspected terrorist even to avoid a bomb attack is wrong as the means used is violence and is unethical.

Similarly, views of the majority is immaterial for a civil servant while deciding ethical actions. E.g. silently supporting moral policing by a mob as was seen in many cases and so on.

Conclusion

“The end may justify the means as long as there is something that justifies the end.” – Leon Trotsky. Though utilitarian concept is well applicable in majority of the civil servant’s decision, a sound moral justification is needed for achieving the end.

5. How do scientific facts alter one’s beliefs? Are actions based on scientific facts always ethical? Illustrate.**Introduction**

A fact is a thing that is known to be consistent with objective reality and can be proven to be true with evidence. Scientific facts are verified by repeatable careful observation or measurement by experiments or other means. In the most basic sense, a scientific fact is an objective and verifiable observation, in contrast with a hypothesis or theory, which is intended to explain or interpret facts.

Body

Discussions about the ethical foundations of a society and their re-interpretation usually take place when traditional customs or behaviours are challenged by new

developments. In a static society, values are well codified, usually by religion or by tradition. This is true for numerous ancient societies, which remained unchanged for centuries. But wars, invasions or new scientific development or a new culture or religion usually prompt the evaluation of the traditional values. Example: Less than 500 years ago, science was a dangerous business. In 1600, the Italian monk Giordano Bruno was sentenced to death and burned at the stake for a stubborn adherence to his then unorthodox beliefs—including the ideas that the universe is infinite and that other solar systems exist. Galileo Galilei narrowly avoided the same fate but only by publicly renouncing his support of Copernicus' heliocentric view.

Actions based on Scientific facts are ethical

- The ethics of science and science itself share the goal of comprehending in human terms scientists' actions in manipulating the physical world.
- In the ethics of science nothing is expected to be believed with more conviction than the evidence warrants.
- Promotion of science along with the growth of moral values is necessary for human development. Ethics demands reporting authentic results rather than withholding relevant information. That is to say that scientists are expected to be honest. Another ethical requirement on the part of scientists is the proper treatment of living subjects, both humans and animals. This calls for checking and balancing mechanisms to ensure that the health and security of such subjects are endangered neither in research laboratories nor in their natural environment.
- Research findings indicate that if science considers ethical values, then the lives of humans and other creatures are not endangered by destructive agents like atomic bombs and chemical weapons.
- The topics and use of results of research and the methods or practice of science are also the province of ethical concern and social values. In weapons research, in research into better agricultural methods aimed at alleviating hunger, or in low-cost forms of harnessing solar or wind energy in poor rural areas, the researchers are ethical agents responsible for the consequences of their actions.
- Obviously, science can help identify unforeseen consequences or causal relationships where ethical values or principles are relevant. In addition, individuals need reliable knowledge for making informed decisions. Scientists can articulate where, how, and to what degree a risk exists.

Actions based on Scientific facts are not ethical

- Scientific progress, the driving force for the majority of the changes witnessed in the 20th century, requires a critical mind, free of prejudice and open to new ways of thinking.
- The relationship between public and private research is one of the source of ethical issues, which are important not only for the research community, but for all sectors of society.

- Universities and public research institutes encourage their scientists to request funds from industry and to patent their results. Scientists working in the public sector increasingly own patents or shares, or act as consultants for companies. These activities are an important source of income as well as expertise and proprietary technology for the universities.
- Moreover, they are encouraged by politicians since they generate start-up companies and stimulate local economies. Although this phenomenon is considered to be very useful, it can and already has caused conflicts of interest.
- For example: debate on embryonic stem cells. Knowledge concerning human stem cells could be used to devise new therapies that may benefit millions of patients.
- These totipotent cells could be grown and differentiated in vitro to produce specific cell lines, which could be used as cell transplants, for example to replace 'dopaminergic' neurons for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. This is a research strategy and not a working technology. However, the public debate asks if it is ethical to destroy human embryos in order to gain knowledge for the purpose of curing diseases. The arguments against the use of embryonic cells essentially deal with the respect for human life and for human dignity
- Genetically modified (GM) plants have also stirred a growing public controversy. While stem cell research challenges views on the very nature of humanity itself, the ethical implications of GM plants rather raises questions on how to deal with the environment.

Conclusion

There are certain moral values, such as concern for people, empathy, and kindness that are important in setting research priorities in science and in determining the uses of science. There is a need to incorporate these humanitarian values into the science and technology spheres, while maintaining and reinforcing the intrinsic values of science. In the quest for scientific and technological development, ethical values should not be neglected.