In introduction to Ethics


What is morality?

Moral Values
Bernard Gert suggests a common core of values that all people share:

1. Not killing others
2. Not causing pain
3. Not disabling
4. Not depriving freedom
5. Not depriving pleasure
6. Being truthful
7. Keeping promises
8. Being honest
9. Obeying the law
10. Doing your duty

Question: Why is it important to promote moral values?

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

"Now, therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction."

Cultural Relativism

Question: Are "morals" a set of values or traditions that vary from one culture to another?

Question: Are the "morals" of any culture as good as the "morals" of other cultures?

Question: If we accept this idea, can we ever find fault in others for doing what we find immoral?

Question: Can there be any moral progress if we accept this idea?

Moral Dilemma

What is the right thing to do when you are in a situation where moral rules conflict?
What is The Right Thing to Do?

Your best friend is struggling with his calculus class and asks you to share your homework solutions with him. Your help could be the difference between a passing or a failing grade for this student.

The professor has stated that collaboration was encouraged in this class, but also that students shouldn’t share written solutions with one another.

Morals are ground rules that allow us to get along.

Ethics is the means to resolve moral dilemmas.

Normative Ethics

- **Consequence-based ethics**
  - Hedonism or Egoism: do what maximizes the benefits to yourself.
  - Utilitarianism: do what maximizes the benefits to everyone involved.

- **Duty-based ethics**
  - Kant: do what is supported by a rule that can be applied in all similar situations (universalizability).

- **Virtue-based ethics**
  - Aristotle: one should live a virtuous life; virtue will drive one to always do the right thing.