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Syllabus heading

Ethics and Human Interface

UPSC Civil Services (Main) Examination · GS IV · General Studies Paper IV

Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in-human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics - in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators; role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.

Facts & figures for this syllabus heading.

Numbers move. Confirm the latest Budget, Economic Survey or census round. This sheet is for revision, not a substitute for the model answer.

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Ethics

Ethics can be defined as a field of normative science which deals with right and wrong aspects of Human conduct on the basis of established standards with the aim to achieve summum bonum (chief good).; It is based on the basis of human logic, reasoning and objectivity which incorporates societal norms and standards. Example(s); RTI activist Aruna Roy guided by ethical principles fought for transparency and...

Ethics

Quote(s); "Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do." (Potter Stewart).; "In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others. In ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so." (Immanuel Kant).

Normative Ethics

Normative Ethics is focused on the creation of theories that provide general moral rules governing our behaviour, such as Utilitarianism or Kantian Ethics.; The normative ethicist, rather than being a football player, is more like a referee who sets up the rules governing how the game is played. Quote(s); "We should conduct ourselves towards others as we would have them act towards us". (Aristotle); "Act only...

Normative Ethics

100+ Ethics Key Terms 1

Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics is a moral philosophy that encourages individuals to live virtuously by developing good habits and character traits. It was developed by ancient Greek philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates.; Socrates believed that "Virtue is knowledge," suggesting that understanding virtue leads to living the best possible life.; Plato identified four core virtues: Courage, Temperance, Justice, and...

Deontology

Developed by Immanuel Kant ;Focuses on the inherent morality of actions rather than their consequences.; The basis for discerning right from wrong is the categorical imperative; "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law".; The categorical imperative provides a rule-based approach to determining right and wrong, emphasising adherence to duty and...

Deontology

Illustration; If cheating on an exam were universally acceptable, it would erode trust and fairness in education, leading to widespread societal issues like injustice and conflict. On an individual level, it would cause personal guilt and cognitive dissonance.

Deontology

Example(s); Satyagraha and Ahimsa as Deontological Principles used by Gandhiji during Indian National Movement Quote(s); "The means are the end in the making." (M.Gandhi)[]; "Duty is the necessity of acting out of reverence for the law." (Immanuel Kant)[]

Deontology

100+ Ethics Key Terms 2

Utilitarianism/Teleological

It considers an action to be Morally right if it is favourable to more people.; Basis of utility maximisation; outcome of action will determine ethicality of action.; Advocates liberty, equality and freedom[]; As they are necessary for a free environment which is the basis for utility maximisation.; Thus promotes Risk taking attitude(Entrepreneurship),Innovation, Independence instead of dependence.; It was advocated...

Utilitarianism/Teleological

Example(s); Redistribution of income from rich to poor.; Displacement of locals for public project in larger interest.

Utilitarianism/Teleological

Quote(s); "The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation." (Jeremy Bentham).; "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness". (J.S.Mill)

Utilitarianism/Teleological

Harm Principle; It states that people are free to act as per their wish as long as their actions do not harm other persons. It was given by J.S.Mill.

Utilitarianism/Teleological

Example(s); Ensuring vaccination of persons during the spread of pandemic to prevent harm to others.

Utilitarianism/Teleological

Quote(s); "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others". (J S Mill)

Utilitarianism/Teleological

Illustration of Virtue ethics, Deontology and Utilitarianism To illustrate the difference among three key moral philosophies, ethicists Mark White and Robert Arp refer to the film The Dark Knight where Batman has the opportunity to kill the Joker.; Utilitarians, White and Arp suggest, would endorse killing the Joker. By taking this one life, Batman could save multitudes.; Deontologists would reject killing the Joker...

Utilitarianism/Teleological

100+ Ethics Key Terms 3

Ethical Dilemma Occurs when

Two or more values are competing against each other.; Situation should be challenging and a choice is to be made.; One has to make a compromise on some values after the decision. Approach to solve Ethical dilemma can be:

Ethical Dilemma

Example(s); Old lady without document/aadhar at PDS shop (should officials give food grain?); Lockdown necessary to prevent COVID spread vs Migration of workers back to home.; Whistleblowing (**Loyalty vs Truth**)

Ethical Dilemma

Quote(s) "Ethical dilemmas have a way of sneaking up on a person. If something smells funny, stay away from it or help get rid of it." (Price Pritchett)

Morality

It refers to the individual set of commitments acceptable to an individual even when they are rejected by others.; Standards at the personal level of what is right and wrong.; Guided by inner thoughts and external factors.; Moral excellence comes about as a result of habit. We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, and brave by doing brave acts. (**Aristotle**)

Morality

100+ Ethics Key Terms 4

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

A six-stage theory of how children learn and develop a sense of morality. Level 1: Pre-Conventional Morality; Obedience and Punishment: Behaviour driven by avoiding punishment.; Individualism and Exchange: Behaviour driven by self-interest and rewards.

Human Values

Values are enduring beliefs about an ideal mode of behaviour.; They are individual principles or qualities that guide the judgement and behaviour of a person or a group.; Derived from human standards and feelings.; They are standards of conduct for humans.; Values are attitudes or beliefs that contain a "should" or "ought" aspect, such as moral or ethical values.; Values are formed when a particular belief or...

Human Values

100+ Ethics Key Terms 5

Altruism

Altruism is the selfless concern for the well-being of others, where an individual acts in a way that benefits others, even at a cost to themselves.; Altruistic behavior often involves acts of kindness, generosity, or sacrifice without expecting any personal gain or reward. Example(s); Giving up your seat to someone in need in a metro, donating organs, etc.; Akshaya Patra Foundation providing free food to...

Altruism

Quote(s); "**Service to mankind is service to God**" (Vivekanand); "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." (**Mahatma Gandhi**)

Cognitive Bias

Cognitive bias refers to consistent deviations from rational thinking or established norms in decision-making, where people make choices or form conclusions influenced by subjective factors like personal experiences, emotions, or preconceived ideas, instead of relying on objective facts or logical analysis; The way a particular person understands events, facts, and other people, is based on their own particular set...

Cognitive Bias

Quote(s); "It is an acknowledged fact that we perceive errors in the work of others more readily than in our own." (Leonardo da Vinci)

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance refers to the mental discomfort or tension experienced when a person holds two or more contradictory beliefs, values, or attitudes simultaneously. This discomfort often leads to a change in beliefs or attitudes to resolve the inconsistency.; It can also be referred to as a situation of mental discomfort when there is conflict between one's Beliefs, Attitude, Values and Behaviour or Actions.

Cognitive Dissonance

100+ Ethics Key Terms 6

Cognitive Dissonance

Example(s); A politician who advocates for environmental conservation but also supports large-scale deforestation projects might experience cognitive dissonance, eventually justifying the contradiction by claiming the economic benefits outweigh environmental concerns.; An IPS Officer who believes in Non Violence has to give orders of Lathi Charge to maintain Law and Order.

Quote(s); "He had very few doubts, and when...

Moral Agent

A Moral Agent is a person who has the ability to discern Right from Wrong and to be held Accountable for his or her own actions.; Ordinarily human beings are considered as Moral Agents, while animals are not.

Moral Agent

100+ Ethics Key Terms 7

Moral Agent

Example(s); A judge in India who delivers a ruling on a controversial case is a moral agent, as they must consider justice and fairness in their decision-making process, based on constitutional principles and ethics.; In international relations, diplomats are moral agents when they make decisions regarding human rights, treaties, and trade agreements, keeping the welfare of both their country and others in mind....

Moral Muteness

Moral muteness refers to the reluctance or failure to speak out against unethical actions, even when one is aware of their immorality. It occurs due to fear, indifference, or a lack of moral courage.; It occurs when people choose to stay silent even on observing Unethical Behaviour.

Example(s); During the Mahabharata, many characters, such as Vidura, were aware of the immorality of the war, but they chose not to...

Moral Muteness

Quote(s); "What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander." (Elie Wiesel)

Moral Equilibrium

Moral equilibrium is the psychological balance that individuals maintain between their ethical beliefs and actions, where they seek to justify actions that may not align with their morals, to maintain a sense of moral coherence.; It is the idea that deals with most people running a mental scoreboard where they compare their self-image as a good person with what they actually do. If they do something consistent with...

Moral Equilibrium

Example(s); A political leader may justify corruption or questionable actions by balancing them with a positive policy initiative, thus maintaining their personal moral equilibrium.; Donating for charity or on a crowdfunding platform makes us feel good about ourselves.

Moral Equilibrium

Quote(s); "The most important human endeavour is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life." (Albert Einstein)

Moral Equilibrium

100+ Ethics Key Terms 8

Moral Relativism

Moral relativism is the view that moral judgments and ethical standards are not universally applicable but are instead shaped by individual or cultural perspectives, and can vary across different contexts.; It holds that there are no universal or absolute sets of Moral standards. They are Culturally defined. Though there may be a few values that seem nearly universal, such as honesty and respect, many differences...

Moral Nihilism

Moral nihilism is the philosophical belief that moral values are baseless and that no action can truly be deemed morally right or wrong, as moral facts do not exist.; Moral Nihilism is the meta-ethical view that nothing is objectively morally right or morally wrong. It holds that there are no objective moral facts or true propositions. Example(s); Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of the "will to power" challenges...

Moral Nihilism

Quote(s); "Nihilism is not only despair and negation, but above all the desire to despair and to negate." (Albert Camus)

Determinants of Ethics in Human Interaction

Ethics are influenced by individual choices, guided by knowledge, free will and voluntary actions. For example, a child is not ethically scrutinized due to their lack of maturity and understanding.; Nature of the Object: The ethical value of an action is often tied to the nature of the object or situation.; War is generally seen as negative because of its destructive impact on lives and society.; Truth is...

Determinants of Ethics in Human Interaction

100+ Ethics Key Terms 9

Personal Ethics

Personal ethics refers to the moral principles and standards individuals follow in their private lives, including family relationships and personal conduct. It defines a person's moral compass and shapes their behavior, guiding their choices and actions. Example.; Mahatma Gandhi embodied high personal ethics through his commitment to truthfulness, sacrifice, honesty, and discipline, inspiring millions with his...

Professional Ethics

It refers to the Moral Principles or Values that govern the way Businesses and Individuals engage in business activities. Example; Companies not using data collected from consumers without consent is an example of professional ethics. Quote; "Work ethics is important because, unlike intelligence, athleticism, charisma, or any other natural attribute, it's a choice." (Mike Rowe)
Ethics in private/personal relations...

Professional Ethics

100+ Ethics Key Terms 10

Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning involves the process of making decisions based on ethical principles, such as fairness, justice, and rights, to resolve ethical dilemmas.; The process of evaluating right and wrong using ethical principles and logical thinking to guide actions and decisions.

Moral Reasoning

Example; In Indian judicial reforms, judges use moral reasoning to decide on cases related to fundamental rights and social justice.; In India, seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in government jobs and legislatures. The moral reasoning is that this upholds the spirit of democracy by ensuring all citizens have a stake in governance and helps correct historical injustices.

Moral Reasoning

Quote; "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically." (Martin Luther King Jr.); "The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings." (Albert Schweitzer)

Moral Intuition

Moral intuition refers to the immediate understanding of what is right or wrong without the need for conscious reasoning.; Immediate, instinctive sense of right and wrong, often guiding actions without conscious deliberation.

Moral Intuition

Example; A business leader immediately recognizing the unethical nature of a corporate deal and opting out despite potential profits.; Feeling compelled to help a stranger in distress without stopping to analyze the situation.

Moral Intuition

100+ Ethics Key Terms 26

Code of Ethics

A code of ethics is a set of guidelines or principles that outlines the ethical standards and expectations for behaviour of an individual, organisation, or profession.; It provides a framework for ethical decision-making and helps to promote integrity, professionalism, and accountability.

Code of Ethics

Example(s); Medical Council of India (MCI) Code of Ethics and Regulations sets Ethical Standards for physicians in India, including principles such as maintaining the dignity and honour of the medical profession, prioritising the well-being of the patient, and avoiding conflicts of interest.; Public Services Code.

Constitutional Morality

Constitutional morality entails the adherence to constitutional norms within a democratic system. It goes beyond the literal interpretation to encompass a commitment to values such as sovereignty, social justice, and equality in constitutional adjudication.; In the context of the constitution of India, the constitutional values are Democracy, Socialism, Equality and Integrity etc. briefly it is the preamble which...

Ethical Dilemma

Occurs when.; Two or more values are competing against each other.; Situation should be challenging and a choice is to be made.; One has to make a compromise on some values after the decision . Approach to solve Ethical dilemma can be: Example(s); Old lady without document/aadhar at PDS shop (should officials give food grain?); Lockdown necessary to prevent COVID spread vs Migration of workers back to home....

Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, and favor information that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs, while giving less consideration to information that contradicts them.; It establishes that people naturally favour information that confirms their previously existing beliefs. Example(s); Voters who support a particular political party may ignore negative reports about their preferred party and...

Conformity Bias

Conformity bias is the tendency of individuals to align their opinions, beliefs, or behaviors with those of a group, often to avoid conflict or out of a desire for acceptance, even if it contradicts their personal views.; It is the tendency people have to behave like those around them rather than using their own personal judgement. Example(s); During elections, many people might vote for a party simply because it is...

Determinants of Ethics in Human Interaction

Deliberate Human Conduct: Ethics are influenced by individual choices, guided by knowledge, free will and voluntary actions. For example, a child is not ethically scrutinized due to their lack of maturity and understanding.; Nature of the Object: The ethical value of an action is often tied to the nature of the object or situation.; War is generally seen as negative because of its destructive impact on lives and...